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Opera Considered as State Ceremony

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Contents

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Opera Considered as State Ceremony

This thesis attempts to show the ways in which governments treat opera as an institution, endorsing, through ceremony and ritual, the power of the state. Its main contention is that the opera institution (which combines opera companies and opera houses) is useful to the state and supported by it for reasons other than cultural. It will be argued that opera has performed these supra-artistic functions since its first performances, held as celebrations to commemorate important events in the ducal palaces of Italy in the 16th century.

The institution of opera, and opera houses, have existed in England and France since the 17th century. Their remarkable permanence is investigated against the background of changing political and social events in those countries. Furthermore, in order to show that the hypothesis concerns the essential nature of opera and does not necessarily confine itself to the two countries investigated in detail, examples are given of state support of opera, in its European form, in other places.

The argument is carried primarily by detailed investigation of the cultural histories of the states under examination, and by detailed exposition of the language which is used to describe opera. Thus the thesis rests on historical and cultural analysis, treating opera and opera-going primarily as a sociological phenomenon rather than as a musicological one. It has chosen not to deal with differences in repertoire, or with the differences in critical response to various opera productions, as it is a part of the argument that from the government perspective, details of stage performances are relatively unimportant. Of course the thesis does not deny that there will be many people who enjoy opera purely as an art, and who will make discriminating judgements between operatic performances, but insists that for nearly four centuries European governments have seen opera as transcending its artistic core, and have supported it for non-musical reasons.

One important implication is that there exists a flaw in the reasons governments give for funding opera institutions. In the terminology of the 1990s they are presented as 'artistic flagships', in competition with other arts activities for state arts funding. If this argument is accepted, they should properly be excluded from any general 'arts budget', and should instead be financed by the same methods, and for the same reasons, as are other state palaces and state ceremonies.

Chapter 1

Introduction

If financial support by the state is the prime yardstick of importance, then in Europe opera must certainly be the most important of the arts. Where the arts enjoy considerable state subsidy, opera receives the most significant share.[1] This is true not only in countries such as Italy, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, where there is a long history of opera, but also in newer European countries where there is no indigenous operatic tradition. Finland, for example, opened its new opera house in Helsinki in 1993. It has already by far the largest state grant of any arts organisation in Finland.[2]

When this kind of weighting is discussed, it is usually explained by politicians and funding bodies, as if opera is, self-evidently, the superior art, somehow rising above the narrower traditions of drama, music and dance, from which it borrows to form a whole which is, seemingly, much greater than its parts.

Yet this account does not go far to explain the extraordinary fact that governments, intent upon curtailing public expenditure elsewhere or otherwise indifferent to the arts, will go on supporting opera, and that companies will sponsor opera, and seek benefits from that sponsorship, even when they neglect the other arts. Nor does it explain why in Britain the Royal Opera House should be amongst the first recipients of national lottery funds and to date receive the largest share of any arts organisation.[3] Furthermore, it does not explain why opera is supported by governments which, it might be imagined, would consider the art and its associations, antithetical to their political vocabulary. In 1793, for example, at the height of the terror of the French Revolution, the Commune supported the view that the opera be maintained, as did Napoleon I who closed the doors of other theatres.[4] Neither does it explain why, immediately after the Russian Revolution in 1917, the new rulers of the USSR, determined to keep the Bolshoi Opera House

intact, while subjecting the whole of the rest of the arts – drama, painting, music and literature – to rigorous reappraisal.[5] Nor does it explain why the first socialist government in France since the 1930s, should decide in 1982 that the design and construction of a new opera house was to be of such supreme national importance, developing it, under the aegis of a major Presidential project.[6] Finally it does not explain why a left-wing Australian State government should decide that an opera house was so essential to post-war Sydney that an international competition be set up to create it and a source of funding generated and designed specifically in order to finance it.[7] In every instance it is that the powers in question attributed to opera a significance much greater than that traditionally invested in an entertainment, a cultural institution, or a venue. These operas performed the function of national showcases representing a physical demonstration of each of these states' political, social and economic status or coming of age, through the maintenance or construction of a cultural monument.

Even more critically however, the view that the opera is just another of the arts does not begin to account for the extraordinary way in which the history of opera, and the grand opera houses, is intermingled with the history of governments most particularly with the rituals and public displays by which governments demonstrate and reinforce their authority. In times of change, it is the opera, both the institution and the house, which remains constant, while constitution, governments, ministries and even church are in flux. This is most pertinently in evidence in France where in the past three centuries the State has veered dramatically from absolute monarchy to republic, empire, different forms of constitutional monarchy and democratic enfranchisement, yet opera has been ever-present, a constant in a fluctuating society. Although its meaning was adapted in terms of superficial changes of society and taste, at no time was its rôle fundamentally challenged. In changing political contexts, its meaning remained constant.

Again and again, successful revolutions, victories in battle, peace agreements and national commemorations are celebrated in the opera house. Plainly, opera is not merely the best-supported of the arts, it is also a symbol of the continuity of governments, and is most important of all, an integral part of state ceremonial. Like the grandest form of monarchy or religious rites, the

operatic institution is an environment of complex ceremonial traditions expressed by the kind of audience which traditionally attend it and the monumental architecture which houses it. Opera is more than a composite art, or a social experience, it is a state ceremony and has important political consequences, giving wider and richer significance to it than the other 'arts'. In this way opera can be seen to represent the quintessence of the establishment arts and patrician culture.

The most obvious way to demonstrate the paradoxes within contemporary language concerning culture and government policy is by a detailed comparative historical analysis of opera houses funded by the state and this will be undertaken in Chapter 3 of this thesis. The intention of such a study is to demonstrate that opera has performed the function of legitimising the power of the State through the use of ceremonial ritual, since its beginnings as entertainments performed in the ducal palaces of Italy in the 16th century. These events served to support the spatial hierarchy of the audiences' seating structure and contributed to demonstrate the power and glory of the court. In the present day these conventions have been adopted by and translated into the terminology of the modern democratic state. The Australian cultural historian Donald Horne highlights the ritualistic rôle which the British Monarchy plays out with its coaches, uniforms, palaces, ceremonies and jewels.[8] Such performance is operatic in dimension and these legitimations are in fact played out by all States with or without a constitutional monarch. It is this physical and functional iconography which the state makes use of, which is considered to be worthy of consideration.

Opera houses constructed today disguise to a certain degree the codified structures of old. For example, in France, the new 'people's opera', Opéra Bastille, was designed with the specific intent of increasing accessibility to the house and the creation of an equality of distribution within it,[9] and the house itself was situated in a popular quarter of the city, thus appearing to take into account the precepts of contemporary cultural vocabulary. Nonetheless, although the Bastille district is steeped in strong political, republican and popular historical associations, the new opera house reinforces in the same way as all French opera houses have done, spatial configurations which denote ranks of hierarchy. One enters the house by ascending a massive

staircase framed by a traditional arch. Certainly, there are no boxes in this new house and the aisles are kept to a minimum thus divesting the traditional audience of certain privileges formalised in the structure of older houses. Yet its hierarchical configuration is well demonstrated on evenings when the opera house is used as a venue for a state event. The aristocracy and bourgeoisie of yore may have been transformed into corporate clients by the 1980s, but the Head of State has not been divested of his rank and the ceremonial duties which accompany it. Thus, one could witness, the inauguration of the house on 13 July 1989, on the eve of the bicentennial of the French Revolution, the Presidents of France and the United States representing democratic leadership of both the right and left, seated in the central row of seats in the first level of tiers; the traditional position for the Royal Box. They are placed on the first balcony and receded, facing the stage directly, so that the audience is obliged to turn 180 degrees to pay its respects, (often in the form of applause accompanied by fanfares, or the playing of the national anthem), as often occurs on the occasion of state ceremonial presentations such as galas, before turning to the ceremony of the stage. On such occasions spatial segregation is no more democratic or popular in form or meaning today than it has always been.

Opera in all senses of the word was not merely a backdrop for state ceremonial but sometimes took on an acute political dimension. It is no accident that establishment figures were often targets of assassination attempts at opera houses, nor that Queen Victoria chose to mark her successful escape from an assassination attempt by appearing the following evening in full regalia at the opera. The opera manager Benjamin Lumley describes the scene:

> "Far more interesting in its way, ... was the appearance of the Queen in the theatre (Her Majesty's) on the 31st May, being the evening after an insane attempt upon her life. The visit of Her Majesty had been expected. The opera house was filled in every part to overflowing; and on the entrance of the Queen the expression of enthusiasm was electrical. The whole audience rose to its feet, and one loud deep burst of congratulatory applause burst forth from the vast concourse of human beings. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved. Many ladies sobbed aloud. During this demonstration the Queen stood at the front of her box and curtsied repeatedly, while Prince Albert bowed in reply to the deafening congratulations. The audience would not allow the opera to proceed till the 'National Anthem' had been sung. ... At the words 'Scatter her enemies,' in particular, the most deafening acclamations arose, and one cheer more was raised when Her Majesty resumed her seat in the corner of the box."[10]

The opera house was a fitting symbol for the monarch to demonstrate permanence and power. The opera houses in turn were sometimes closed by governments as precautionary measures if political ferment seemed too great and their symbolic importance seemed likely to attract trouble. Sometimes, the entire theatre was razed, as was the case under the orders of Louis XVIII after the assassination of the Duc de Berry, the intended successor to the crown of the ailing monarch, at the opera in 1820.

Within such construction and behaviour lies an inherent paradox which evokes the question: can an institution such as the opera, at one and the same time, represent certain formalised traditions which are steeped in the ethos of the proscribed behaviour of past social and political systems, as well as assimilate a new meaning - that is the arena of the enfranchised, the public which believes it has access to culture as a right? Furthermore, is this paradox compatible within the current subvention structures and is opera really competing on similar terms as those of the other arts for the same pounds, francs, dollars or kroners? In other words, is 'opera' an art in the sense that contemporary dance, theatre or painting are 'arts'?

The importance of the political context of the argument established, the opera house as monument and its relationship with the state will be discussed in detail.

It is important to emphasize the obvious, and say that it is highly significant to this thesis that opera houses so closely physically resemble each other. Until the 19th century they contained iconographic references displaying classical conventions: porticos, grand staircases, allegorical sculptures, traditionally significant colour schemes of gold, crimson and blue, the private spaces of boxes and the more public foyers. The buildings themselves were of monumental design resembling temples and palaces. Examples will be cited of writers who describe the universality of the experience both as a building in the heart of a city and an event, by making a connection between opera's past and present imagery. It will also be argued that whether one is transported to the opera by coach, métro or motorcade, anticipation and expectation are common factors.

Opera houses were traditionally placed at significant axes in the cities, close to courts or amusement centres of the aristocracy, their location shifting

as focal centres of power changed. Roland Barthes wrote of the connections between the Opéra Garnier and the demography of Paris describing the Opéra and the district that surrounds it as the heart of "materiality, business, commerce".[11] These are distinctive signs of its topological meaning.

During the 20th century opera houses have simply translated these motifs into the arena of the symbolic monument. The Sydney Opera House, its sails dominating the harbour of the city defying the engineering principles of the day, well illustrates this point. Even the much criticised, recently constructed, Opéra Bastille which failed to convey the all important quotient of 'architectural marvel', contains the elements of portico and staircase so necessary to communicate the acceptable meaning of an opera house. The colour scheme of the fabric for the chairs, for example, was chosen by the incumbent President of the Republic with the absolute intention of breaking from the traditional connotations which red, blue or green implied in the symbolic iconography of previous regimes. The polemic surrounding the choice of colour for the seating fabric in the Opéra Bastille well illustrates the importance of such objects towards the creation of a language reflecting the meaning of the opera house which is valid for today and yet reflects its history and tradition. Michèle Audon, one of the directors of the project comments on her reasoning behind this choice, stressing the symbolic importance of the chosen colour:

> "I could have agreed to grey or a blue, but I couldn't accept red. We even found a justification: red corresponded to the theatrical interiors of the 19th century, the blue to those of the 18th, another colour was needed for our century."[12]

It is also significant that state ceremonies take place in opera houses more often and with greater ceremony than in other kinds of theatres. The purpose of the state gala is to display the finery and importance of the personages in attendance and the hierarchy of the political structure. No modern state has neglected this use of the opera house and even if the performance is not billed as a gala, if an important political person is in attendance they, their dress, and those who accompany them, are commented upon in contemporary journals. This will be developed in detail.

It is a central part of this thesis that the way people have customarily described the opera throughout several centuries and through many political

changes shows an astonishing coherence of view about what opera actually is. What does at first glance appear to be different in the 1990s is the language employed by respective states to justify subvention. It is suggested in this thesis that such language is designed with the intention of making the public believe that 'accessibility', 'accountability' and 'excellence' are the criteria for support of such institutions, but these terms serve another purpose. The similarity of contemporary statements about opera with those of, for example, the first *privilège* accorded to opera by Louis XIV in 1669 (which stressed the importance and need for the creation and maintenance of a national institution), will be examined. It will be demonstrated that there has been no real evolution in the intention behind language used and reasons given for the creation and support of state cultural institutions. Thus when *The 1994 Annual Report of the Department of National Heritage* sets out as its rationale that its brief is to "provide for institutions of national importance entrusted to the Government's care"[13] and that "They contribute to a sense of national identity and national pride" and "help to shape the future."[14], it will be read with the knowledge that the substance of such articles are little different from treatises devised three centuries previously and across the Channel, and can indeed be shown to be part of a linguistic tradition of governmental rhetoric.

The perspectives of politics and history are not the only form in which opera's remarkable continuity can be demonstrated. This thesis will investigate what the opera represented to those who attend it as well as taking note of the opinions of those who do not. The inclusion of descriptive examples written by commentators on the appearance of opera houses, its audience, their social mores, codes and traditions will contribute to the argument from another perspective. It is not surprising that those who traditionally attend state opera houses are part of establishment culture and that attempts which have been made to adjust the social structure of audiences in France, England and Australia even if seriously intended, have largely failed. It will be demonstrated that audiences often attend opera to make a statement about their social position as much as to see the performance itself and that they are prepared to pay handsomely for this privilege. It will be shown how the transport they take, the clothes and

ornamentation they wear, the food and beverages they consume, the programmes they buy, indeed even the tickets themselves, distinguish the act of going to the opera from that of an ordinary social activity.

Even fictional realms of literature and cinema repeatedly reinforce such a view by representing scenes of opulence and traditional privilege at the opera. Count Vronsky seeking Anna Karenina in her box and thus scandalising St. Petersburg society or Emma at her first opera seduced by the provincial bourgeois world in *Madame Bovary* or Julien Sorel's desperate sighting of Mathilde at the Paris Opéra in *Le Rouge et le Noir* all demonstrate this. Even Charles Dickens, not known for championing élitist institutions, acknowledges this distinction as he made Mrs Sparsit the object of derision by Mr Bounderby in *Hard Times*:

> "'...Why, what do *you* know about tumblers. At the time when, to have been a tumbler in the mud of the streets, would have been a godsend to me, a prize in the lottery to me, you were at the Italian Opera. You were coming out of the Italian Opera, ma'am in white satin and jewels, a blaze of splendour, when I hadn't a penny to buy a link to light you.'
> 'I certainly, Sir,' returned Mrs. Sparsit, with a dignity serenely mournful, 'was familiar with the Italian Opera at a very early age.'
> 'Egad, ma'am, so was I,' said Bounderby, '- the wrong side of it. A hard bed the pavement of its Arcade used to make I assure you. People like you, ma'am accustomed from infancy to lie on down feathers, have no idea *how* hard a paving-stone is, without trying it. No, no, it's of no use my talking to *you* about tumblers. I should speak of foreign dancers, and the West End of London, and May Fair, and lords and ladies and honourables.'"[15]

Indeed criticism of opera is often centred on these extraneous characteristics which appear in these instances to signify opera and what it denotes rather than the performed work itself. In Britain, there is a long history dating from the late 17th century where opera is frequently and vehemently chastised as being an institution distinct from contemporary British culture. These arguments have frequently been couched in nationalistic terms, the complaint being that it is a foreign institution serving an élite the tastes and linguistic preferences of which are apart from that of the general public.

It is true that traditionally the nobility did build and support opera houses. During the 19th century entrepreneurs took the risks but looked towards 'society' to support the institution. The importance the government placed on financial management and attendance are themes which have never ceased to preoccupy the political aspects of operatic management and which will be demonstrated later, remain unchanged today. Thus Dr. Véron could describe

the social and musical life of the Paris Opéra of which he was director in the 1830s as being "the triumph of the bourgeoisie".[16]

Later in the century the English theatre entrepreneur Sir Augustus Harris recognised that it was very much the whole operatic experience which attracted his audience and therefore the kind of venue in which it was performed counted very much indeed. He stated to the operatic chronicler Hermann Klein "I shall recoup myself ... with the aid of society" and when Klein asked, not without cynicism "Do you expect the leaders of fashion and their following to come to Drury Lane?" Harris' reply was most firm "Certainly not, ... I have every intention, all being well, of taking Covent Garden at the earliest practical date."[17]

This principle held true under the entrepreneurial management of Sir Thomas Beecham at the beginning of this century, who recounted in his memoirs that he was strongly advised to perform his opera season at Covent Garden because this theatre "had been associated in the public mind with opera for over 200 years" and thus would attract a traditional audience.[18]

Thus the opera and opera house have not only served as a metaphor for political pundits of all persuasions who, from the early 18th century, have felt that to deride it was somehow to criticise those in power but they have also been used successfully by entrepreneurs to harness the support of those in power. The current debates about opera, which continue to treat it as an art like any other, are therefore essentially misleading as they do not take into account its special historical relationship with the state and social critics. To argue about subvention policy and not to take into account these important historical factors based on tradition and convention is at best, limited and naïve and at worst, fraudulent. Such conditions define its meaning even in contemporary society and funding patterns demonstrate this. It is evident that opera has, throughout centuries of continued debate, been consistently maintained by the state. Thus the Arts Council of Great Britain, or its successor Arts Councils, may appear to quibble about the size of the cake which they allocate to opera, and the Ministère de la Culture in France may appear to be unconcerned by the recent squabbles over the management of the Opéra Bastille, yet both have ensured that establishment figures drawn from the great corporate pillars of respectability or members of the aristocracy

head these institutions, and direct them along political lines consistent with their government's philosophy.

It could be thought to be an insidious claim by governments when they say they treat opera as 'just one of the arts'. They are certainly trying to meet immediate objectives in a contemporary political jargon. This may be convenient, but sorts ill with their behaviour, for they act as if opera is overwhelmingly more important than other arts. Moreover, this deception greatly harms the other arts as arguments over funding become distorted, as false and inflated esteem are bestowed on certain categories of designers and artists, which thus serve to denigrate arts which may be more intelligent, critical, relevant and life enhancing to today's public than the ten thousandth performance of *La Bohème*.

Nothing in the thesis should, however, be taken to imply that opera, and opera lovers, are engaged in an art that is inferior to classical theatre, orchestral music, great literature or painting. Such comparisons between the arts are difficult to make, but it must nevertheless be emphasized that it is when governments claim that opera ostensibly gains their support simply because it is the supreme art, the public is being misled. Opera matters to governments for different and important reasons, and that must be made clear. It must also be understood that whatever the motives might be of the Monarchs, Prime Ministers, Presidents and Generals who attend the great opera performances, elsewhere in the house there will certainly be many who are there simply and solely because they love the art. It will however be argued in these pages that although such opera-lovers exist in large numbers, they are not necessarily the most important factor in the essential opera experience which European states promote and that many of the well known 'opera-lovers' have provided some of the most valuable comparative critiques of social mores and political intent. The heart of this argument is thus to investigate the source of its political context and not to debate musical aesthetics.

Opera is of course sung in many places other than the great state opera houses. Europe has many specialist opera houses which are of private foundation such as Bayreuth and Glyndebourne. It has many touring companies such as Britain's Opera North which turn theatres into opera

houses by their visits, and it has many successful opera houses maintained in their cities, and supported by local populations, such as the recently renovated theatres of Lyons and Bordeaux. The arguments in this thesis may well help to explain some curious phenomena in such houses, such as the way in which the audience behaves and the price it is prepared to pay to attend such performances. It might also help to explain the many opera houses funded by German municipalities which provide a repertory of opera, and some argue is another form of opera although it is clearly not state opera. This thesis, however, essentially seeks to make its case by concentrating upon those great national opera houses which are so curiously – and to some in arts management, irritatingly – close to national governments.

The argument rests upon the European operatic tradition, most particularly as exemplified in Britain and France, but it will be found (and demonstrated in some detail in the case of the Sydney Opera House) that the argument generally can be applied to all opera houses which are related, even loosely, to Western cultures. Thus the recent crisis in the Bastille Opera House in Paris, which is explained by this thesis, bears an uncanny similarity to the 1957 crisis in the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, when the Argentinean government confronted the artists, and closed the theatre.[19] Although the United States is a Federation and lacks a strong recent tradition of state subsidy for its arts, the organisation and presentation at the Metropolitan Opera House is still in many respects more like its European counterparts, than the rest of the US performing arts.

Finally, it is worthwhile to pause and consider the question of why opera houses continue to be built today. The Sydney Opera House is a good case study, as such a project highlights the real meaning of opera in the 20th century. It reveals the apparent incongruity whereby a country which veers ever more sharply to republicanism, and which prides itself on its 'new world' image, has been sufficiently impressed by the European cultural tradition, to provide what is in effect, a national opera house built to represent its traditional meaning.

The Labor Premier of New South Wales, John Cahill, who was largely responsible for the promotion of the project equated democratic principles and traditional symbolism as a justification for the construction for such a house:

> "... the building when erected will be available for the use of every citizen, ... the average working family will be able to afford to go there just as well as people in more favourable economic circumstances, ... there will be nothing savouring even remotely of a class conscious barrier and ... the Opera House will, in fact, be a monument to democratic nationhood in its fullest sense."[20]

The example of the Sydney Opera House thus well illustrates the confusion inherent in the construction and maintenance of opera houses in today's modern states. It can be seen today in the United Kingdom that the equally ambiguous domain of subvention and funding allocation to opera, is being played out amongst two traditionally rival operatic establishments. These are now being pitted against arts organisations of all kinds for funds from the national lottery. The argument inherent in such a policy is that there is one cake to be divided up into socially equitable parts and that the previous 'have nots', the non-establishment arts, have a seemingly equal voice and rights to the resources of a finite cake. Traditionally, however, this cake has not been finite where opera is concerned; nor indeed is it today. Opera is expensive. The very nature of resources required to produce it as well as the funds needed to maintain its premises render it so. When opera has run into financial difficulty ways have been found and assurances have been given by incumbent powers to support the maintenance of the institution. An example of such occasion is the assurance given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Hugh Dalton to Sir John Anderson, Chairman of the Covent Garden board in August 1946 when he said that "the State will be assuming a definite obligation to see to it that, ... Opera is not let down".[21] The pledge of such support for opera, in post-war austerity Britain, was by no means an inconsiderable nor lightly proposed commitment, particularly as commitments of this kind are traditionally binding upon successor chancellors.

Thus the intention of this thesis is to stress that opera not only occupies an unusual position in the continuum of state funded arts organisations, but that its position is unique in that there is a demonstrable continuity of political intent throughout European opera. It is this continuity which is central to opera's meaning over time and in very different regimes.

It is the essential contention of this research that opera houses are useful to the state and supported by it, for purposes quite other than cultural. Moreover it will be demonstrated through compounded historic example that

governments treat state opera houses as monumental constructs which serve to legitimise, through the use of ceremony and ritual, the power of the state. Furthermore such an assertion is proscriptive. This research does not end with that which has occurred until now for, if such a trend is accepted, then opera's meaning will be projected further into the socio-political structures of societies to come.

The language used throughout in this argument is English. It will however from time to time be necessary for quotations within it to be in the French language, as the terms are significant in their original form, rather than in translation.

The question which prompted the initial research is a very simple one. Why does opera – unlike theatre, music and literary forms – change its nature so little but retain such powerful support from all kinds of states? The hypothesis attempts to reconcile its inherent complexities by suggesting that it is the nexus between opera and the state which determines the central nature of opera, attracts such unwavering state support, and draws such powerful reactions from its supporters and detractors.

Chapter 2

The Meanings of Opera

The introductory remarks of this thesis are concerned with the question which lies at the heart of this study: what is opera? Is it primarily a work of art, is it a social experience, is it both these things and something more, and if so what is that quality, and how can it be defined? Furthermore why has opera or what is understood by it, existed in one form or another almost as long as European nation states have existed? Indeed, what is it that distinguishes opera from the other arts which make up its parts?

The use of the word is laden, if not overburdened, with associations far removed from simply that of artistic performance. Its use is always evocative, sometimes controversial. This chapter will investigate not only what opera is, but also more complex issues involving the meaning of the term 'opera'. This might appear to be an over simple question but it is fundamental in order to understand the central argument of this thesis which concerns the definition of the unique components of a significant European art pre-eminent in artistic, social and political domains over the past four centuries.

The etymology of the word opera can be traced to the Latin. It is the plural of *opus* 'a work'[1]. In current usage it is generally accepted as coming from the Italian *opere* to mean 'work', cited by authorities such as Grout and Warrack as an abbreviation of the Italian phrase *opera in musica*, that is "Drama to be sung with instrumental accompaniment by one or more singers in costume, recitative, or spoken dialogue may separate musical numbers."[2] In its substantive form it therefore means 'composite oeuvre'. At its most basic level *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines opera as "a dramatic work in which music forms an essential part."[3] Opera is certainly a performed work, a composite of many arts and levels of artistic activity which brings together musicians, designers and dancers amongst others into what has been described as the "ultimate", the "extravagant", the "élite" art.[4] Yet what does

this tell one of an institution interwoven in the European tradition of ceremonial display, ritual and particularly culture, which has been maintained throughout its four hundred year history by powerful political forces and which is so often critically at the forefront of social experience and public conjecture? What does this broad term really signify?

It is impossible absolutely to define a word which means so many different things. Thus to avoid confusion and to distinguish between its separate and overlapping meanings the terms 'an opera', 'the opera' and simply 'opera' can be taken to describe each part of the event: the work; the experience; and, its function.

This thesis rests its argument on the important distinction between these three elements, for so much of the confusion surrounding opera stems from an incomplete understanding of their distinctly separate and yet overlapping parts. These distinctions can be described in terms of:

i) 'an opera' - the performed composite musical work;

ii) 'the opera' - the social connotations of the venue, the people who frequent it, their modes of dress and behaviour; in short the many events external to the work itself and yet so intrinsic to the notion of going to 'the opera'; and

iii) 'opera' - the widest and hence most difficult meaning of the word. When 'opera' is referred to, it will mean an operatic institution which emulates state ceremonial, disseminating the images closely aligned with any legitimation of power. It is at 'opera' that the glory and ceremonial of state can be suffused from a seemingly non-political venue. Simply, it is the extended meaning encompassing the first two elements of 'performance' and 'experience' as well as including its political meaning, where 'opera' becomes an arena of civic performance.

Because this third meaning of the word is so complex it is important to pause and examine it more fully. Both 'an opera' and 'the opera' contribute to the meaning of 'opera'. In 1995 'an opera' entitled *The Eighth Wonder* was performed at 'the opera' the Sydney Opera House. Its libretto proclaimed the vision and construction of the state institution in all the senses of the term and lauded the visionary magnificence of the realisation of such a dream.[5] Thus

this composite work, performed at the opera house, about the emergence of a national institution provides a contemporary example of 'an opera', 'the opera' and 'opera' so convincingly similar to the values represented by the Opéra of Lully in the time of Louis XIV.

It is not only by this kind of example that the third sense of the term, i.e. 'opera' can be explained. The ritual of social behaviour and codes built into the decorative and structural elements of opera houses also serve to reinforce opera's ultimate meaning. That opera houses are seemingly more permanent structures, grander, more intricate and awesome buildings, is a significant contributing factor towards understanding them. Opera's extravagance, grandeur, and status, have been a consistent element in European history. It has been sustained and maintained by regimes which at times, it would appear, had very little reason to finance an institution very closely aligned with their predecessors from opposing regimes. Justification, however, for continued subvention was consistently found whether it be directly taken from the state's coffers, by donations from private benefactors, arts councils, cultural ministries or state lotteries. Whatever the form of subvention the essential elements of 'opera', i.e. the maintenance of an institution where a selective section of society could intermingle and which also served as a display case has been a very high priority throughout.

This argument which can be expressed as 'opera' being a performance, a venue and an event, as well as an expression of the state's image, is also pertinent to European and non-European opera alike. One might imagine that modern democratic states would reject the notion of such antediluvian institutions as endorsing principles long thrown-over, being representations of power, rank and privilege. Yet in the United States or Australia opera also carries with it such associations. It is precisely these states' keenness to embrace this institution which further supports the argument that the notion of 'opera' is crucial to an understanding of the term, as it is opera's political meaning and monumental stature, which is the nexus between its state ceremonial function in all western societies.

This study would not be complete without a more complex investigation of these notions. It is in this context that the terminology will now be treated.

These terms will be defined using traditional conventions and clarified in the context of their demonstrated usage.

2.1 An Opera

This is the primary level of meaning: the performed work.

2.1.1 Definition

Standard definitions of opera describe the components which make up the work itself. In *The Oxford English Dictionary* opera is defined as:

> "A dramatic performance in which music forms an essential part, consisting of recitatives, arias, and choruses, with orchestral accompaniment and scenery; also, a dramatic or musical composition intended for such performance, a libretto or score."[6]

However *The Collins English Dictionary* places less stress on music, giving its dramatic elements equal emphasis:

> "1. an extended dramatic work in which music constitutes a dominating feature;
> 2. the branch of music or drama represented by such works;
> 3. the score, libretto, etc., of an opera"[7]

The *Websters Third New International Dictionary* defines opera in similar terms to that of *The Oxford English Dictionary* as:

> "1. A drama in which music is the essential factor comprising songs with orchestral accompaniment (as *recitative, aria, chorus*) and orchestral preludes and interludes."[8]

In French, definitions of 'opéra' differ only slightly in terms of precision from that of English dictionaries taking the meaning of performed work to relate directly back to the French understanding of *tragédie lyrique* the form of opera developed under the reign of Louis XIV. In the *Grand Robert* it is defined as:

> "1. Poème, ouvrage dramatique, mis en musique, dépourvu de dialogue parlé."[9]

The *Littré* dictionary also offers a strict interpretation of 'opera' concurring with that of the *Grand Robert*:

> "1. Poème dramatique mis en musique, et plus particulièrement, grand poème lyrique composé de récitatif, de chant et de danse, sans discours ou dialogue parlé."[10]

In his *Dictionnaire de Musique* Jean-Jacques Rousseau gives a very full interpretation of the term describing it as a 'poem, music and decoration' to which various parts of the body respond.

> "Les parties constitutives d'un opéra sont le poème, la musique et la décoration. Par la poésie on parle à l'esprit; par la musique, à l'oreille; par la peinture, aux

> yeux: et le tout doit se réunir pour émouvoir le coeur, et y porter à la fois la même impression par divers organes."[11]

Opera has to the French therefore a particularly poetic quality and is a composite art which does not include the spoken word. The opera historian E.J. Dent concurs with the view that the French understanding of the term is of a more literary nature. He wrote:

> "Opera in France was always a much more literary affair than in other countries, even during the seventeenth century when in Italy and in England as well the literary element was considered seriously important."[12]

The English convention lays greater stress on the music than the French. For example the editors of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* define 'opera' as:

> "a drama set to music with instrumental accompaniment by singers usually in costume..."[13]

The Oxford Dictionary of Opera provides a very full, if not emotive explanation of the term which appears to be rather partisan to the view that it is an important musical form which should be preserved and regenerated.

> "Opera - frequently pronounced ailing, senile, braindamaged, in need of major surgery or transfusions of new ideas, even clinically dead - has never been so healthy or so active. ... It has increasingly drawn the interest of designers and producers from the theatre, treating the art of the composer as no less dramatically exacting than that of the playwright. ... Most crucially, composers who now regard it as the most exciting and important musical genre - the word 'tradition' so sustaining, but also so cramping in the past, is perhaps no longer helpful when such a variety of dramatic music now claims a place as operatic."[14]

This last assertion, written in 1992, is interesting in the light of previous definitions of opera. It is hard to distinguish aesthetic conjecture from purist definition, however if a work contains the elements of drama, music and sung voice when is it not deemed to be opera? The French appear to argue that when there is spoken voice then there is not 'an opera'. However there are significantly more complex notions determining this question. Later in this thesis it will be argued that it is supra-aesthetic reasons which determine whether a work falls outside what is understood to be the realm of opera. If it does so it is likely to be lacking other elements incorporated in the notions of 'the opera' or 'opera', with meanings extrinsic to the traditional understanding of the operatic experience or not legitimised within its institutional context.

The most recent publication and certainly the most erudite to provide a definition and explanation of opera is *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* published in 1993. In it Bernard Williams asserts that "Opera is by definition staged sung drama" and then qualifies this statement considerably and like *The Oxford Dictionary of Opera* discusses the broader elements surrounding the term, emphasizing stylistic differences between operatic forms and traditions. The conclusions it provides further reinforce the hypothesis that opera only really takes on its full meaning when joined to the experience (embodied in this instance by the opera house) and tradition (i.e. connections to the state and its ceremonial visage):

> "The present position is that 'opera' is to some extent an evaluative term, used to refer to sung drama which is either 'serious' enough, or traditional enough in form and technique, to be staged in an opera house."[15]

Finally the preface to *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* poses the question of what 'an opera' is in general terms as well as providing a historical background:

> "In discussing the scope of this dictionary, and indeed in the planning of it, one question has constantly to be addressed: what is an opera? 'Opera' is here understood to mean, primarily, a work belonging to the genre that arose in Italy about 1600. Broadly, we have aimed to regard that genre as comprehending works designed for performance in a theatre, embodying an element of continuing drama articulated through music, with words that are sung with instrumental support or punctuation."[16]

According to David Littlejohn in *The Ultimate Art* opera is very much a composite performance consisting of many arts:

> "Opera has the ability to attack us with the combined power of three or four art forms (and popular spectacles) at once. A full-length play, a three-hour orchestral concert, frequently a ballet, a pageant or parade, a choral concert, and (depending on the designer) a certain amount of painting and sculpture may all be *contained* within one ordinary opera."[17]

The New Oxford Companion to Music provides a broad context and very much the reverse of conventional analysis by claiming that it is opera's qualities extraneous to the performed work which render it important. It is the combination of music, drama, poetry and the visual arts provide a combustive environment of creativity, permanence and debate:

> "Opera has probably aroused more passion and critical comment than any other musical genre. It has been condemned as irrational and nonsensical; on the other hand, it has been considered the supreme expression of the human spirit. It has helped to bankrupt kings, it has provoked revolutionary demonstrations; it has praised monarchs, encouraged popularist movements, expounded philosophy,

> explored psychology, and more often than any of these, it has simply provided entertainment. Such variety stems from the very mixture of elements in opera: music, drama, poetry, the visual arts, and (at times) dance. ... but the very multifariousness of opera has ensured its survival for nearly four centuries."[18]

This description certainly provides the reader with scope with which to interpret opera as a performed work with an extraordinary potential of meanings which he suggests is generated by its very nature as he attributes to opera a capacity to arouse passion and debate, to challenge the human spirit.

In his preface to *The History of Opera*, the editor Stanley Sadie asserts a very different vision of opera drawing the reader's attention to the external issues:

> "There is always a danger ... of treating it so primarily as a musical form that the other aspects of it – as a social phenomenon, as a convergence of art forms, as a spectacle, as a world of financial crisis – may be overlooked."[19]

One is warned against treating the musical form in isolation and thus overlooking its more complex and deeper meanings.

2.1.2 Critics' view of Opera

Dictionaries can provide only a restrictive philological vision of the art. There exist many varied and famous descriptions and definitions of opera as a performed work provided by writers, critics and social commentators. The following represents a selection taken from English and French critics over a period of three centuries. These examples demonstrate both a uniformity of perception and subtle changes of fashion in the interpretation of what constitutes opera. Indeed it has been both praised and criticised but the fact that it is an important institution has remained unchallenged.

According to the historian E.J. Dent, the very first time opera was mentioned in print in England was in the prologue to *The First Dayes Entertainment* by Davenant which was performed at Rutland House in 1656:

> "Think this your passage and the narrow way
> To our Elisian field, the Opera."[20]

This merely described that such a thing named opera existed and that it must be a splendid event to be described as an Elysian field.

Amongst the earliest descriptions of opera was written by Dryden whose idea of it was precise:

> "An Opera is a poetical Tale, or Fiction, represented by Vocal and Instrumental Musick, adorned with Scenes, Machines and Dancing."[21]

This gives us a clear indication of what kind of stage representation he would expect to see.

Charles de Saint-Denis Saint-Evremond, author of one of the first critical texts on opera, took a rather more singular view of it. Writing to the Duke of Buckingham in 1678 he not only defines the work in its conventional sense but also strongly gives his opinion as to its value:

> "Si vous voulez savoir ce que c'est qu'un OPERA, je vous dirai que c'est un *travail bizarre de Poësie & de Musique, où le Poëte & le Musicien également génés l'un par l'autre, se donnent bien de la peine à faire un méchant Ouvrage*."[22]

The critic and satirist Joseph Addison in his criticism of the opera *Rinaldo* wrote in *The Spectator* in 1711 that:

> "An opera may be allowed to be extravagantly lavish in its decorations as its only design is to gratify the senses and keep up an indolent attitude in the audience."[23]

In 1728 Alexander Pope also appeared less than enchanted with the art. In *The Dunciad* he described Italian Opera as:

> "a harlot form ... its affected airs, its effeminate favourite sounds, and the practice of patching up these operas with favourite songs, incoherently put together."[24]

The late 18th century descriptions of opera are similar to their predecessors although appreciations differ greatly. Dr. Johnson's celebrated phrase "an exotic and irrational entertainment" refers specifically to Italian opera and is similar to that of Dryden. Poetical tales necessarily lack "reason".[25]

Lord Chesterfield commenting on the nature of operatic performance and content described opera as "absurd" and "extravagant" yet it was precisely this absence of reason which appealed to him:

> "As for Operas, they are essentially too absurd and extravagant to mention: I look upon them as a magic scene, contrived to please the eyes and the ears, at the expense of understanding;... Whenever I go to the Opera, I leave my sense and reason at the door with my half-guinea, and deliver myself up to my eyes and ears."[26]

The French who for most of the 18th century were caught up in disputes as to whether French or Italian works were more acceptable did not however differ in their understanding of what opera's essential elements were. The

entry under *opéra* in Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de musique* is very similar to Chesterfield's appreciation:

> "Spectacle dramatique et lyrique où l'on s'éfforce de réunir tous les charmes des beaux-arts dans la représentation d'une action passionnée, pour exciter, à l'aide des sensations agréables, l'intérêt et l'illusion."[27]

Voltaire too focused on its strangeness and magnificence, its capacity to seduce the senses with the implication that operatic works are merely frivolous amusements:

> "L'opéra est un spectacle aussi bizarre que magnifique, où les yeux et les oreilles sont plus satisfaits que l'esprit."[28]

Burney true to his descriptive form provides a detailed explanation of what he perceives constitute the parts of an opera:

> "As the British government consists of three estates: King, Lords and Commons, so an opera in its first institution consisted of Poetry, Music and Machinery: but as politicians have observed, that the balance of power is frequently disrupted by some one of the three estates encroaching upon the other two, so one of these three constituent parts of a musical drama generally preponderates, at the expense of the other two. In the first operas POETRY seems to have been the most important personage; but about the middle of the last century MACHINERY and DECORATION seemed to take the lead... But as the art of singing and dramatic composition improved, MUSIC took the lead."[29]

Burney's references to the structure of the state machine and the operatic world are significant. He has identified institutions in which there are codified structures of order and ascendance.

During the 19th century critics concerned themselves less with defining the work than describing the experience itself. The following article from *The Chronicle* in 1804 is rather typical of the period:

> "....its powers of creation are unlimited. It thus seeks to present the most captivating forms to the artist, while by the united force of poetry, painting, music and action, it possesses an irresistible influence on our hearts."[30]

Comments of the kind that Delacroix wrote in his *Journal* on 16th May 1857 endorse this view:

> "Les modernes ont inventé un genre qui réunit tout ce qui doit charmer l'esprit et les sens. C'est l'opéra."[31]

Twentieth century interpretation of the meaning of opera brought with it a more complex level of understanding of the operatic genre based on the relationship between opera and the themes it represented. This is demonstrated by W.H. Auden who added a psychological dimension to this level of definition:

> "If music in general is an imitation of history, opera in particular is an imitation of human willfulness; it is rooted in the fact that we not only have feelings but insist upon having them at whatever cost to ourselves.
> ...
> In recompense for this lack of psychological complexity, however, music can do what words cannot, present the immediate and simultaneous relation of these states to each other. The crowning glory of opera is the big ensemble."[32]

'Opera' themes are generally concerned with the great myths of western culture such as Orpheus, Medea or Mephistopheles and much of its mystique is linked to archetypical constructs founded in religious practice. This has given rise to much criticism focusing on the relationship between the two. An example of this is the analysis of opera by Theodor Adorno who suggests that "Opera's song is the language of passion," adding that:

> "It is not merely the commanding stylisation of existence, but also the expression of what nature accomplishes in man again and every conversion and mediation, a conjuring of pure immediacy."[33]

Joseph Kerman in his celebrated work *Opera As Drama* suggests that it is opera's style which forms the possibility of creating its own constructs:

> "...The postulate is that opera is an art-form with its own integrity and its own limiting and liberating convictions."[34]

In the light of these new kinds of interpretation put forward in the earlier part of this century, Peter Conrad from the perspective of a contemporary literary critic treats the operatic work as possessing greater breadth of domains:

> "Opera has ... potency because it is itself mysterious. Like the rites of initiation in pagan religion ... opera treats aspects of experience no other art has the boldness to address. It is the song of our irrationality, of the instinctual savagery which our jobs and routines and our nonsinging voices belie, of the music our bodies make. It is an art devoted to love and death (and especially the cryptic alliance between them); to the definition and the interchangeability of the sexes; to madness and devilment..."[35]

Such interpretations are not wholly representative of the understanding of opera in the 20th century but are indicative of those influenced by the new fields of literary criticism and psychological schools of thought. They have contributed a new perspective into the meaning of an operatic work. Opera does however still maintain its traditional significance alongside these more sophisticated analyses.

French critics still endorse a traditional view of an opera. In his polemical study *L'Opéra de l'avenir* André Boll asks the question *'qu'est-ce que l'opéra?'*

and draws conclusions which echo the French dictionaries' definition of the term:

> "L'opéra est un spectacle dramatique dans lequel l'adjonction de la musique, par le truchement des chanteurs, vient renforcer l'intensité émotive d'un texte, c'est en quelque sorte de la musique en action dans un espace théâtral.
> A la constitution d'un tel spectacle se trouvent conviées les principales formes de l'art: la musique, la poésie, la danse et aussi la peinture et l'architecture."[36]

In the editorial of *Opéra Special Télérama* in October 1993 the following definition encompasses all the fields hitherto discussed but focusing on these crystallised in the phenomenon of the diva:

> "L'opéra est un genre artistique complexe, au carrefour de tous les arts: la musique, la littérature, les arts plastiques. Mais c'est avant tout un spectacle. Un spectacle vivant, terriblement humain, où rien ne peut jamais être simulé. ... Au delà, ils sont un instrument de musique à part entière, unique, fragile, parfois défaillant, mais toujours sensible à l'extrême. ... Mais que peut-on demander de rationnel à un homme, une femme, qui, par le seul enchantement de sa voix, puisse imposer le silence, parfois jusqu'aux larmes, à des milliers de spectateurs dans une salle de spectacle?"[37]

This element of mystery has replaced the discussion of machines in the 18th century and is now also most important to contemporary understanding of what an opera is. This is well expressed by Martinoty in *L'opéra imaginaire*:

> "L'opéra est en place là ou, entre livret, musique, décor, se croissent trois imaginaires, de l'écriture, du compositeur, du peintre"[38]

It would appear that opera as an entertainment has the capacity to become what the public interpret it as being. At times it is the beauty of a voice, at others extraordinary machinery, at others a performance layered with symbolic and mythological overtones. The elements which constitute 'an opera' certainly do provoke varied interpretations. A humorous but pertinent description of 'opera' appeared in *The Guardian* in 1992:

> "Two women were discussing Christmas plans for the family. One announced that she was taking her mother to the opera. The other was appalled: 'Why on earth are you doing that?' - to which the response was, 'Well, it's panto for grown-ups, isn't it?'"[39]

This is very different from the more formal definitions of opera but there may very well be a strong element of truth in this interpretation.

2.1.3 'An opera' - usage in this thesis

Taking into account that opera, the performed event, encompasses all the elements described by dictionaries, in usage and by experts in the field at this

level, the definition of 'opera' as a staged, mixed media performance sung to a greater degree throughout, adequately fulfils the terms in which it shall be used in this work. For the duration of this thesis when using the term 'an opera' it shall be taken to mean this first level of definition.

2.2 The Opera

Secondary level of meaning: the experience.

2.2.1 Definition

The Oxford English Dictionary gives a second level of definition to opera involving the concept of:

> "at or to the opera (which includes the notion of the place): cf. at the play."[40]

It also provides examples of the word incorporating the paraphernalia of opera attendance:

> "opera-cloak, a cloak of rich material worn by ladies at the opera or in going to or returning from evening parties."
> "opera-glass(es), a small binocular for use at theatres, concerts etc."
> "opera-hat, a hat suitable for use at the opera;..."
> "opera hood, a lady's hood for use at operas or in going to evening parties."[41]

The Websters International Dictionary adds to this list with:

> "opera pink: a light yellowish pink that is redder and less strong than light apricot and darker than petal pink"
> "opera pump: a woman's low cut, high-heeled shoe usually cut from a single piece of leather or fabric and untrimmed" and
> "opera slipper: a man's house slipper cut low on both sides of the shank."[42]

The Grand Robert also includes notions of colour. Its fourth definition of the word *opéra* is:

> "couleur rouge pourpre"[43]

These descriptions of accessories linked to opera contain notions of exclusivity with certain forms of behaviour in society. An important question to be raised in connection with these items is why they are linked with the word opera and what could be the significance of such an assertion?

2.2.2 Usage

Opera also conveys less literal meanings, which convey its sense. It functions as an element of society and reflects society's understanding of, and

attitude to, itself. These ideas are displayed through commonly used linguistic constructs and transmitted as largely uncontested notions such as 'opera is élitist', 'opera is difficult', 'opera isn't for people like us'. The difference between the first level of definition and this second level is that an opera, the performed event as such does not convey these notions but society's attitude towards the opera additionally interprets the whole event.

The Oxford English Dictionary also highlights some peculiarities of usage. An opera patron is described as an "opera-goer" by Harpers magazine in 1883:

> "The opera-goer, that is to say, the citizen in an opera hat and an opera frame of mind."[44]

This description is of interest for it leaves the boundaries of conventional definition. What can be understood by 'an opera frame of mind'? To test a sentence such as 'Tonight, I am going to the opera' warrants investigation as it contains many latent assumptions. 'Going to the opera' can be demonstrated to mean anticipation of an event to which the individual will need to dress for, be transported to, watch and listen to, and perhaps carry out many prescribed social functions.

The Oxford English Dictionary also includes the usage of the term as a verb in 1853 by Reade where he wrote "He will fête you, and opera you".[45] This phrase can clearly be understood as meaning that the recipient of such treatment will be favoured by a festive, if not memorable experience. It is these social elements of the definition of Opera which augment the importance of this level of definition.

The opera also performs the function of a venue at which social rules and values of the ascendent class can be played out. Not only does the performed piece often concern itself with the great classical themes which call upon the use of ritual and ceremony, but it also adopts the habits of the society within which it is performed and expresses them on stage as a performed work. The effect of this is felt far further than the proscenium arch. Often the performance imitates the audience, which in turn tries to emulate the performance, thus creating a self fulfilling mirror from both sides of the stage.

The opera house is also very much an element of the experience of opera-going. Indeed, another meaning of the operatic experience is that of the

opera house. The *Websters International Dictionary* describes the opera house as "A theater devoted principally to the performance of operas".[46] That state opera houses are huge public edifices defining experience is a significant element of opera. So too are the vestments which the audience wear, their mode of transportation, their social codes and ritual. These subjects will be treated fully in Chapter 4 on the experience of opera.

2.2.3 Critics' Definitions of Opera and Society

Critics throughout opera's history have found much occasion to describe the operatic experience. The descriptions of the experience are numerous and extremely varied, and there is extensive material attesting to the importance of this function. This section will limit itself to establishing that the distinction within the terminology is valid.

In the 18th century Voltaire described the opera as a venue of social reunion without purpose:

> "L'Opéra n'est qu'un rendez-vous public où l'on s'assemble à de certaines jours sans savoir pourquoy: C'est une maison où tout le monde va, quoy qu'on dise mal du maître et qu'il soit ennuyeux."[47]

and in the 20th century Theodor Adorno describes the value of such a meeting place:

> "The official life of opera can teach us more about society than about a species of art that is outlining itself..."[48]

The history of opera's social function and reasons for its development are well described by Rolf Liebermann, Director of the Paris Opéra in the late 1970s in his Introduction to *L'Opéra, Dictionnaire chronologique de 1597 à nos jours* in which he interprets changes in the very nature of society as being a catalyst in the changing relationship between the opera and society and the opera's meaning within society:

> "Destiné à l'origine au divertissement des cours princières, l'opéra, à sa naissance, touchait cinquante personnes par représentation. Au XVIIe siècle, les opéras de Mozart étaient composés pour un auditoire de deux cents spectateurs. Au siècle dernier, le public aristocratique s'est effacé devant la bourgeoisie qui a fait du théâtre lyrique un de ses domaines reservés. Nous nous trouvons aujourd'hui devant une explosion culturelle qui embrasse le monde entier. Elle est partiellement fondé sur l'action des mass media ... permettant ainsi à des millions de personnes d'accéder à une dimension de l'art qui leur était jusqu'ici peu familière."[49]

Liebermann suggests in fact that as the power base has changed over the past three hundred years, so too has the operatic audience and in turn each of these changes has effected a subtle change on the nature of the representation and its meaning.

In *Opera: The Extravagant Art* the contemporary American critic, Herbert Lindenberger defined the opera in broader terms developing the connection between the art and its social significance:

> "Opera, ... is notable for the multiplicity of forces that must be brought together openly for its making – for example, the financial powers that provide for its lavish needs; the diverse and often warring talents drawn from a number of arts, who are expected to work together to create and perform its texts; the audiences who use it to satisfy both their aesthetic and their social cravings. Like the imposing and prominently situated architecture in which it is ordinarily housed, opera displays its connections with art and society at once."[50]

This view is supported by the autobiographical writings of the twentieth century French author Michel Leiris in *L'Age d'homme* which vividly describe the mystery and awe coupled with connotations of privilege and access into a select world which attendance at an operatic event evoked:

> "Les spectacles qu'on emmenait voir à l'Opéra, par excellence théâtres des grandes personnes, qui semblaient naturellement le reflet même de la vie de ces dernières – où tout au moins de celle d'entre elles qui étaient les plus belles et les plus privilégiées – monde d'existence prestigieux auquel, avec une certaine crainte, mais des profondeurs les plus lointaines de mon être, j'aspirais."[51]

The journalist Philippe Olivier also draws together the traditional elements of opera with the fact that it is always socially fashionable:

> "Fascination, envoûtement, séduction, liturgie, attrait, sortilèges, enchantement: des diverses raisons qui fond de l'opéra un phenomène toujours à la mode."[52]

The former cultural bureaucrat, diplomat and member of the *Académie Française*, Pierre-Jean Rémy muses that perhaps opera is simply a fantasy reconstructed:

> "Peut-être que ça aussi, c'est construire un Opéra: le monde – dans la pierre, le verre, le ciment et des scènes qui se répondent – de tous nos phantasmes, nos plus secrètes envies et nos désirs avoués au grand jour. L'Opéra, dès lors, devient une métaphore, une fable aussi où chacun se retrouve. Une légende."[53]

The descriptions of the opera by Lindenberger, Leiris and Olivier communicate its rôle in 'modern' western society. It is seen as fashionable ("à la mode"), as a mirror of life ("le reflet même de la vie") and to "satisfy" "aesthetic" and "social cravings" and finally Rémy draws it all together describing its potency as perhaps the ultimate adult legend like Peter Conrad,

evoking romantic fascination with mystery, allegory and ritual in this scientific and pragmatic age.

Opera also has quasi-religious connotations, bringing together the religious rites and buildings designed in the form of temples to evoke a sentiment that has constantly attracted and repelled people for supra-artistic reasons:

> "L'opéra m'a toujours fait penser à un temple qui reçoit ses fidèles saisonniers à des dates et heures précises. Comme à toutes les messes, ma ferveur de néophyte subissait quelques éclipses. Il m'arrivait d'être distrait, de penser à autre chose et, oserais-je le dire, de m'ennuyer."[54]

wrote Jack Beaudouard in his essay *Mourir à l'opéra* in which he appeals to his readers to accept that opera contains many of the same elements as religious ritual.

The following 'definition' was published in a publicity leaflet for the English National Opera in 1989. It is of interest here as an example of the extent to which political objectives are used to justify an attempt to introduce a redefinition of the meaning of opera by taking the definition out of the traditional context and extending it to the politicised language indicative of post-war Britain:

> "Opera...
> 1. an extended dramatic work in which music constitutes a dominating feature, either consisting of separate recitatives, arias and choruses, or having a continuous musical structure.
> 2. the branch of music or drama represented by such works.
> 3. the score libretto, etc., of an opera.
> 4. a theatre, such as **English National Opera** at the **London Coliseum**, where opera is performed.
> 5. a theatrical experience, like those organised by **The Baylis Programme**, where opera leaves the theatre and goes into the community.
> 6. opera outreach and education more (much more) of the same from **The Baylis Programme**...."[55]

In itself this attempt to redefine the social meaning of opera is extremely significant. The primary definition of opera remains unchanged but the meaning of the experience itself has been reworded in a style designed to display authenticity. This clearly shows the difference between the performed work and attitudes of society to 'the opera'.

2.2.4 'The opera' - usage in this thesis

In this section the meaning of opera will be taken to comprise not only the performed work and the building which houses it, but also the audience, its attitudes, the social codes, the conventions of its structure, the location of the house, its history: in short, its signs, signals and language. To distinguish between these two elements of opera a) the performed work; and b) the experience, when referring to the relationship between opera and society or in reference to the house itself, the term 'the opera' will be used throughout the thesis.

2.3 Opera

This is the tertiary level of opera: its function as a figurative instrument of state.

2.3.1 Definition and usage

The third level of meaning of 'opera' is crucial to the understanding of the word, yet the definition of it presents certain unique difficulties. It focuses on 'opera's' rôle as a vehicle conveying in a functional and figurative sense its very purpose, that of an instrument of state.

Distinct from the first two elements of opera which could be defined through conventional process; one has no recourse to dictionaries and historical text setting precedents with which to provide a basis for definition. Indeed a great deal of the confusion surrounding this term is derived from the fact that this real notion is not acknowledged openly and plainly in writings on opera. Its meaning although perfectly well understood has been latent, interpreted, understood or deduced by those concerned with opera. It is certainly clear that when many people write about opera they do not mean 'an opera' or 'the opera' but something else which through this thesis is to be identified as 'opera'. An example of this greater meaning is conveyed by Randolph Churchill in his comments on the re-opening of Covent Garden after the Second World War.

> "it was a come down ... for though the gold and crimson have returned, the boxes have shrunk to a mere dozen or so on one tier only; and though the audience, headed by the King and Queen and the Prime Minister, contained figures of every known form of distinction, they were not on the whole much to look at; for

> nowadays nobody has any clothes worthy of the name. It was an 'austerity' opening."[56]

He identifies opera as being an occasion for the display of state symbolism accompanied by ceremony. Ceremonies and state events normally are not drab. Their purpose is to display visually the power of the state through colour, symbol and ritual setting the tone for the post-war years, that of 'austerity'.

This is displayed also by Pierre-Jean Rémy in his memories on the initial project of constructing a new opera house for Paris and combining the notions of national dignity and popularist politique:

> "il faut un grand auditorium 'digne de Paris' ... De même l'opéra doit-être populaire: 4 000 personnes au moins."[57]

The same intention is evident in the words used by The Hon. J.J. Cahill, Premier of New South Wales in 1959 with reference to the imminent construction of an opera house for the city of Sydney.

> "...my Government is convinced that Australia is worthy of a building in which our contribution to the music of the world can be fittingly demonstrated."[58]

Cahill foresaw an opera of which his country could be 'worthy'. The clarity of relationship between the state and opera is well demonstrated through his statement.

It is the broadest interpretation of opera incorporating notions of 'the house', 'its demographic relationship to the city', 'the audience' and 'its status' which demonstrate this element of its definition, as they all function as factors which contribute to the creation of its subtle relationship with the state.

Finally it is the editors of *The Oxford Dictionary of Opera* who define the Paris Opéra as not only a building but also an important state institution.

> "OPÉRA (Paris) The name by which the most important French operatic institution, and its building, have often been known, even when officially entitled Académie Royale de la Musique Théatre des Arts, Théatre de la Nation etc., recently Opéra Bastille, and when occupying various of 15-odd theatres during its history."[59]

The foundations of opera hire from sources very deeply embedded in the notions of the modern state. Indeed three major elements occurred in the 16th century which contributed to the creation of opera. They were: i) the artistic renaissance; ii) a philosophical broadening; iii) a re-adjustment of the consciousness of the structures of statehood and power. Opera performed the metaphoric rôle of a representation of these three elements addressing society

and proclaiming their message. The rediscovery of Ancient Greek notions of moral harmony provided the first indication of a possible nexus between the state and the arts, both from a political and aesthetic viewpoint. This enabled opera to become an entity greater than a composite oeuvre and 'the state' more than an abstraction of power.

Indeed the eminent opera historian Robert Donington wrote of the relationship between power, wealth and opera at this time that:

> "One of the conditions most favourable to the emergence of opera was the competitive extravagance that characterized royal courts and other wealthy establishments. Visits and victories, weddings and births, departures and homecomings were celebrated with elaborate pageantry, often amounting to a sort of informal drama."[60]

and John Littlewood concurs with such a view emphasizing that the initial connection between the powerful and wealthy and opera has easily been translated into the modern day meaning of the term:

> "This odd form of music drama, invented by Italians around 1600, was patronised in its history by aristocrats and princes. For many of them, it served as an ostentatious, court controlling demonstration of their wealth and good taste. As princes lost their thrones and aristocrats their power, the financial support of opera was maintained by upper-class burghers, first in Europe, then in its former colonies, as a ritual form of socialising status assertion and self-display."[61]

Opera and the state are concepts derived at roughly the same time in modern history and their relationship is at the essence of this work. The juxtaposition of the concepts of statehood and opera are fundamental to any serious discussion of the question of the meaning of opera. Until now the term 'the state' has been treated as if its meaning were clear but there are certain elements of this term which require clarification.

2.4 The state - definition and usage

'The state' is an extremely difficult notion and much has been written about it. There are forty different definitions provided in *The Oxford English Dictionary* alone. The frequency of its use and its meaning sometimes confuse clarity concerning it. However meaning 29a can be identified as what 'the state' can be taken to mean in this work:

> "The body politic as organised for supreme civil rule and government; the political organization which is the basis of civil government (either generally and abstractly, or in a particular country); hence, the supreme civil power and government vested in a country or nation."[62]

and definition 17a could well describe much of the experience of opera:

> "Costly and imposing display, such as befits a person of rank and wealth; splendour, magnificence (in manner of life, clothing, furniture, buildings, retinue, etc.); solemn pomp, appearance of greatness."[63]

Indeed this definition is so close to the second level of meaning of opera that it provides an extraordinary example of the connection between the meanings and function of opera and the state.

The *Collins English Dictionary* also provides some useful definitions of the State:

> "- a sovereign power or community:
> - the territory occupied by such a community:
> - the sphere of power in such a community: affairs of state; (and)
> - involving ceremony or concerned with ceremonious occasion."[64]

From those meanings it can be understood that on its most evident level the State is a motoring power within a definable community which has recourse to ceremonial representations of its being.

Andrew Vincent in *Theories of the State* suggests that:

> "the State is a complex of ideas and values, some of which have an institutional reality. These ideas are diverse in texture and diverse in interpretation. To try to grasp them is to understand much of the European political experience in the last four centuries."[65]

This is exactly the same time span as that of opera which can also be treated to a test of similar language. It too embodies a complex network of ideas and values, the institutional reality of which is often all too evident in its outward trappings.

Edmund Burke in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* makes a number of observations about the nature of society and the state. The following passage highlights its direct relationship with the broader public world and the tenants upon which it rests:

> "It is the publick ornament. It is the publick consolation. It nourishes the publick hope. The poorest man finds his own importance and dignity in it, whilst the wealth and pride of individuals at every moment makes the man of humble rank and fortune sensible of his inferiority, and degrades and vilifies his condition."[66]

He also observes the mechanisms needed in the form of buildings, music, decorations to reinforce the state's power and the nature and tone of its relationship with society:

> "...I had almost said this oblation of the state itself, as a worthy offering on the high altar of universal praise should be performed as all public solemn acts are

> performed, in buildings, in musick, in decoration, in speech, in the dignity of persons, according to the customs of mankind, taught by their nature' that is, with modest splendour with unassuming state, with mild majesty and sober pomp."[67]

Many commentators and philosophers have considered the rôle of ceremony, display and ritual as a means by which governments demonstrate power. Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes are examples of such thinkers. Thus the state has been demonstrated to be a sphere of power in a community concerning itself primarily with its own affairs, its administration, its policies, its hierarchy. Its interests are insular, to conserve its notional power and in so doing to promote its benefits to its own population and to communicate its status to communities outside it. The State achieves this through the use of symbolic props. These are translated into physical reminders reinforcing its power: buildings, ceremonies, rites.

The opera house in these terms can be interpreted as a temple which serves to deify the social ethic of the state through a design reflecting the aspirations of the regime. By parading within it the important social and political forces, creating an internal ceremony and a holy attitude to its sacred acts, the state has created the ideal backdrop upon which to display its fabric of political intent.

Tolstoy in his seminal work *What is Art?* provides a highly pejorative description of the art and the experience of opera and its relationship with the Russian state and the behaviour of its upper classes before the revolution:

> "...a huge audience, the flower of the educated upper class, sits through these six hours of mad performance and leaves imagining that, having given stupidity its due, it has acquired a fresh right to regard itself as progressive and enlightened."[68]

He juxtaposes this image of a self-congratulatory and somewhat blasé aristocracy tottering on its last legs with the interpretation which a labourer might make of this act:

> "Listening to this opera, I could not help thinking of a respectable, intelligent, literate village labourer ... and imagining the terrible perplexity of such a man if he were to be shown what I had seen that evening."[69]

thus suggesting that the vision which the upper classes gave out of itself by its very performance at the venue would symbolise the meaning of opera to the public at large.

Littlewood who has written on opera over the past thirty years believes that opera and the state are inextricably linked today as ever:

> "The prestige value of opera, and more particularly the symbolic value of opera houses and companies, have become such established articles of political faith that local, state and national governments (or groups of wealthy individuals) insist on maintaining them at almost any cost."[70]

For the purposes of this work 'the state' will be taken to be synonymous with governance, authority and power.

There is however a further problem of terminology as throughout the course of this thesis words such as 'power', 'glory', 'ceremony', 'ritual', 'tradition' and 'culture' are used as if they too are understood. These terms will be clarified when they are introduced.

2.5 Conclusion

The question 'what does the term 'opera' actually mean?' lies at the centre of this section. Attempts to define its meaning make use over and over again of the phrase: 'opera is'... At different times it would seem that: opera is ritual, opera is drama, opera is ceremony, opera is singing, opera is a mixed media performance. These associations and many others could be regarded as the key words within the definition of opera. They affirm its existence and in a sense define it as an absolute entity.

Opera has been investigated in terms of the three distinct concepts of 'an opera', 'the opera' and 'opera' and it has been concluded that its meaning incorporates part and all of these elements. Opera is a cultural symbol spanning literal, symbolic and philosophical domains. Its very reliance on ceremony, privilege and grandeur reinforce its importance and meaning.

It is the understanding of these three levels of definition which combine to create the imaginary construct which is commonly referred to as 'opera'. These words based on compounded notions take on a meaning far greater than merely the sum of their parts.

The rest of this thesis will demonstrate the importance and use of language in terms of opera and how it helps to reinforce the images and rhetoric which convey its essential meaning.

Chapter 3

The Context of Opera

An Historical Examination of Opera and the State in England and France

Opera, it has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, contains a plurality of meanings. Thus to assess its history one needs to bear in mind that the work, the experience and the political context of opera, contribute in tandem towards its historical significance.

National operatic institutions have been ever present in modern western history.[1] Indeed, not only has opera been labelled the "Ultimate Art"[2] but it might also be considered to be the 'ultimate institution' as the history of opera and the grand opera houses is undeniably intermingled with that of governments. This is demonstrated by the fact that throughout the changing fortunes of the state, opera has remained constant and has at times served not merely as a ceremonial backdrop but taken on an acute political dimension. Such elements are illustrated by the numerous political incidents which have taken place within its walls and the debates of social and political nature which have occurred in its name, as well as the treatises written by incumbent powers as justifications for its continued political support.

Clearly, just as the notion of opera has changed during the period under examination, so too has the notion of the state. In France alone, when in 1669 under Louis XIV, opera was a very small enterprise serving the direct interests of the monarch, in the 1990s it now reflects the larger functions of a bureaucratic and democratic state. State power, control and authority have grown enormously in the countries in question. This changing state function is reflected in the changing nature of the operatic institution over this time.

An assessment of opera's subvention over the past three centuries is an effective way of examining its relationship to the state. Opera has often been associated with political forces in power and yet its actual funding has been

held at arms length from power except when the institution has been deemed to be in immediate jeopardy and the king, government or chancellor of the exchequer has directly intervened to save it.[3] The state has invariably determined that there will be opera and nominated its immediate supporters to organise the provision of adequate resources for it. In the 18th century this rôle fell upon the shoulders of the nobility[4], in the 19th century the bourgeoisie and the new aristocracy in France, and the traditional aristocracy and new industrialists in Britain, were the mainstay of the operatic audience and supporters, and in the 20th century the arts councils and great corporations and patrons have been looked upon to secure its continued existence. Whichever century is scrutinised it is beyond doubt that the head of state be they monarch, emperor, president or prime minister has supported this institution by attending its inner sanctum and bestowing on it pomp and ceremony and the endorsement of privilege invested with complex ceremonial traditions and manifested by elaborated social structures such as, for example state galas.

A charge brought against opera throughout its history has been that it is very much an art designed to satisfy the 'happy few'. This is largely true but opera gains importance precisely because it is the entertainment of the élite. It has grown as an institution distinct from popular culture, a symbol of establishment culture,[5] a national showcase in which state ceremonies are performed with political consequences. Furthermore it symbolises the continuity of governments both as an institution constantly supported by them but also within the content of the works themselves and the iconography contained within the state opera houses.

The claim that it is foreign has also been a charge against opera. The aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, or corporations in England, for example, often have foreign origins or are amalgamated with foreign interests and opera has reflected such foreign interests in the same way as these influential groups have done. Their foreign sources are very often the strengths of these socio/political groups which are to all intents and purposes national symbols. The élite has been largely more 'international' throughout modern history than those serving them and thus nationalism in terms of opera has to be understood in this broader context.

More specifically, in England, when what was known as Italian Opera[6] was first performed, it was considered to be allied with nobility and grandness. From the 18th century to the early 20th century 'Italian Opera' was commonly understood to be opera. Unlike other musical forms which have a considerable source in English theatre the notion of 'Italian opera' represented a specific musical and theatrical form and was considered to be exclusive. All this is clearly demonstrated by the fact that it was not until 1892 that 'Italian' was deleted from the official title of the Royal Opera in England.[7]

The remainder of this chapter will now examine in greater depth opera's history in terms of the issues raised, that is opera's sources in England and France, its remarkable permanence and legitimacy and the evidence throughout its history that it represents something larger than a performed work or experience.

The investigation will necessarily be limited to selective highlights of operatic history with the intention of illustrating opera's relationship with government from its origins to the present day in order to prove that its connection with the state is not accidental but by design.

3.1 Aspects of opera in the 17th and 18th centuries

In 17th century France the rationale at the core of the absolutist politique of Louis XIV was to produce social devices which enabled him to mould all elements of his kingdom after his fashion. Opera was to serve as a vehicle reflecting a codified image of the state. Distinctions between frontiers and language were not linked to definitive notions of sovereignty and identity in France as they are today and so it was vital for French opera to be associated with French language from the first. The undeniable basis of Louis XIV's reign was the quest for unification and homogeneity and these became the hallmarks of his state. Cultural policy was thus an element of political rationale as vanquished states were brought to yield to the greater power and to adopt the ostensible forms of the dominant culture. Given this political strategy, it would seem that opera lent itself naturally to serve such a rationale and became a state art and a state institution and thus a state symbol incorporating in its meaning the image the state wished to impart of itself to other nations.

Historians such as Kintzler and Isherwood remind us that the intention was evidently to create a grand magnificent opera.[8] What therefore could be more useful to such a regime than a theatrical genre which could present a representation of society and its hierarchy and reinforce it with all that was the most refined in ballet, music and voice, as well as the display of extraordinary machines to astonish a public which had become accustomed to grandiose display? This meaning of opera, which incorporated not only the genre but also its relationship to society and its usefulness to the state, was clearly adopted from its inception in France. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, although the French Opéra has undergone many changes in title, in mode and in subvention, its position within the French cultural order has remained virtually unchanged from its beginnings until the present day.

The nature and form of a state institution, however, varied markedly between the kingdoms of England and France although the notion of the meaning and value of a state institution did not. This again is well demonstrated by the opera's singular relationship with the state. In England, discussion focused upon the need to establish an English opera and the apparent absurdity of the maintenance of an art, the relationship of which was not formalised with the state, and even more significantly it was argued, did not have indigenous roots. The ambiguity of this relationship spurred argument over which language was appropriate for operatic declamation. Italian Opera in England also served as a metaphor for a deeper social malaise, for it was to represent unspecified but powerful forces deeply linked to notions of social distinction and exclusivity but which could not be directly singled out as their unique symbolic function.

Opera in England had thus gained the reputation of being a foreign and unpopular' art whereas we have seen that since its inception in France, opera was sung often in the vernacular and integrated into the heart of the state's symbolic language. This difference between the two countries is significant. Their separate notions of an opera derive from this. 'An opera' in France could be French or of other origin, whereas 'an opera' in England was commonly understood to be synonymous with Italian Opera. 'The opera' in both countries also took on these meanings: in England emphasizing foreignness and in France integrated with the language and state.

Other differences are in part due to the development of the different kinds of political regimes in these countries during the latter part of the 17th century. E.J. Dent suggests that it was the existence of the relatively stable economic conditions of court life in Paris which made it possible for steady progress in opera to be made there whereas in England where these conditions did not apply opera occurred only in spasmodic fits and starts.[9] Nonetheless the major difference between opera in England and France during this period is that opera in France was overtly used by Louis XIV and his predecessors as a ceremonial arm of state whereas in England, where the monarchy was less stable, opera evolved outside the court but acted as an institution which paid homage to the monarchy.

3.1.1 England

It is difficult to establish an exact moment in time when opera first appeared on the English stage. The evolution towards opera, arose out of an eclectic history of procession, mumming, state and religious ceremony, mystery plays and masques. There is no definitive moment when opera could be named as having become an absolute entity in England, rather it evolved through these sources which occasionally took on aspects of operatic form and finally became integrated into the art known as opera.

England has a rich and popular theatrical heritage. Not only was Henry VIII (1509-1547) to demonstrate the artistic aspirations of a renaissance prince by his music, poetry and court entertainments but Elizabeth I's reign (1558-1603) saw the rise of the great English theatre embodied by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. English musicians travelled abroad to Italy which influenced their perception of the nature of the song. Curtis Price states that "English drama has been rich in music since the mid-sixteenth century".[10]

Under the reign of James I (1603-1625) the masque flourished and many historians cite it as a distinguishable antecedent to opera.[11] In the Stuart court, poets, musicians and designers joined together to create elaborate musical performances. Stage performers, designers and diarists travelled abroad to Italy, notably Venice where opera houses were public theatrical venues financed by the wealthy merchant class. They returned to England,

stimulated by the operas which they encountered, and in turn translated them into stage designs and performances emulating the magnificence which they had witnessed in Italy. It was Inigo Jones who fundamentally changed the nature of the English masque. He was greatly influenced by the Italian stagecraft and on his return designed stage sets which incorporated architectural perspective and spectacular effects and machines which defied anything which had hitherto been represented on an English stage. He collaborated with librettists such as Ben Jonson in England and in so doing radically re-structured and reformed the masque. Under his influence the masque soon came to represent a great court extravagance. Eminent theatre historians such as E.J. Dent, Allardyce Nicoll and Eric Walter White suggest that the masques were more than simply performances of a newly derived art representing theatrical innovations and that they also contained distinct social associations linking opera to Florentine courts. This served a dual purpose: the presentation of theatrical magnificence linked with elements such as spatial segregation of the audience as a strict hierarchy of seating was observed.

Thus the masque in conjunction with restoration drama served as a formative episode in the evolution of opera in England which itself was derived from the influences of traditional court art as well as an appreciation of this new Italian art and a fascination with the theatrical potential for the technical aspects of the machinery it involved.

The rise of a wealthy and powerful class in England helped form the basis of patronage for opera in England. Under the reign of Charles I (1625-1649), the poet laureate Davenant was granted a Royal Patent on 26th March 1639. This patent allowed some musical liberties and was a regal recognition of an operatic form into the iconography of state cultural performance. Nicoll describes the restoration theatre as the public demonstration of a venue of entertainment of a privileged and separate class.[12] Later, this separation of classes at the theatre was to become part of the very fabric of the opera-going audience who were to regard the opera as their domain, a venue which they could attend and in turn be surrounded by their own and where they could thus behave with total liberty.

By 1642, however, theatres in England were closed. The Commonwealth (1649-1660) banned speech in public venues as well as

spoken drama. Music was less circumscribed and the sung word still found its way onto the popular stage in England. It was at this time that arguments about the rôle of opera in England began to develop and be debated. Arguments were introduced which are still vigorously maintained today concerning the increasingly opposing camps of supporters of the development of English opera over those who wished to maintain 'Italian opera'. In each instance however Italian opera has maintained its ascendance amongst those dominating political and social circles.

Perhaps this has helped contribute to the development of the paradoxical notion that opera does not exist in England to the extent that this theory has often been taken to be an immutable truth. Throughout the centuries this idea has been advanced by historians, social critics, even opera-goers. If opera is performed and attended why then is its so-called non-existence so firmly asserted? It could be that such critics have failed to recognise that the institution of opera has never failed to exist in England. Indeed England has not produced many opera composers, nor renowned singers and very often works are sung in Italian, French or German but opera has remained an English as well as a European tradition.

English opera, it is generally accepted, was borne out of a reaction to repressive legislation and the puritan ethical code of the Interregnum. The effects of the Commonwealth on the stage have been well documented and the social repercussions manifested in the change of habits and taste and a certain distrust of artifice, were to leave an indelible mark on English popular culture. The popularism of the Elizabethan stage was to lose its cultural foothold given the marked shift in social ethics which puritanism brought about. Nicoll suggests that the nature of theatrical representations and attendance was fundamentally changed after the Commonwealth and that during the restoration it was "courtiers and attendants" who were to become the model of future opera going audiences.[13]

Never far from the operatic environment however, the significance of the debate about its foreignness continued in conjunction with opera's development in England. The American cultural historian, John Dizikes introduces an explanation of the origins of opera in England by drawing attention to the nationalist arguments based on culture and language. He

suggests that the Italian influence on opera in England drew as much from a desire to ignore French cultural manifestations and thus a traditional terrain of rivalry as well as an intrigued interest in a notional idea of what Italy represented which ultimately culminated in a movement promoting national opera. He proffers the view that the invention of this form stems from a distinct reaction to 'foreignness', a desire to distinguish the English qualities of voice, music, drama and style.[14]

The opera in England, isolated from overt links with the traditional venues of power, provided an environment for social and political critique. In 1656, *The Siege of Rhodes*, written in English, was approved by Secretary Thurloe and performed at Rutland House in the same year. This work is often cited as being the beginning of English opera. Some historians lay emphasis on the singular importance of this work in English operatic history as it was an entirely English work which did not bear resemblance to Italian opera and the theme of which dealt with English political concerns.[15]

In January 1657, emboldened by the success of this work, William Davenant applied to Thurloe to mount another opera in the following terms:

> "the usefulness of public entertainments both in keeping up morale and so avoiding mob dissatisfaction, encouraging the trade that results through the spending of a happy crowd, and giving employment."[16]

Certainly such an argument contains little discussion of the art. Opera is here being promoted as a way in which to ensure the maintenance of civil order. Furthermore Davenant suggested that this opera could have as a subject scenes of Spanish cruelty to reinforce the British war effort. Thus *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, again, written and performed in English, became the first alignment of operatic theme and British national interest. Davenant addressed a memorandum to Secretary Thurloe expounding this. It was entitled *Some Observations concerning the people of this nation* and White draws the important conclusion that this document:

> "stressed the importance of public events being accorded recognition on the grounds of state policy and public economy."[17]

Ironically, its existence was to thwart and subvert much of Cromwellian legislation. Indeed, in February 1659 the House of Lords set up an examining committee because:

"'...there are stage-plays, interludes, and things of the like nature called opera acted to the scandal of religion and the Government.'"[18]

Thus opera was in its very earliest days working both for and against the state, on the one hand promoting its interests through the use of heavy handed propaganda, and on the other by providing a public environment whereby this could be challenged. This dichotomy has existed not only in England, but throughout Europe, and examples will be cited to demonstrate that an opera, or events associated with the opera and opera have provoked public manifestations in support for detraction of the ascendant political power.

Some of the first instances of public critical discussion of opera were made by Dryden. The following satirical lines are an example of his opinion:

"Much when they play, how our fine fops advance
The mighty merits of these men of France
Keep time, cry 'Bien' and honour the cadence!"[19]

Clearly he associated opera with being more than simply an opera and in this way he highlighted an important aspect of the notion of opera in England. It is depicted as a focus of national honour and a place of social delineation or segregation. It is the English "fops", the equivalent of a dandy or dilettante, who metaphorically swear allegiance to another flag under the guise of a language and who thus in a sense commit treason, betraying their nation to an usurper. Furthermore, in his *Peru: or a new Ballad* (Satire on *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*)[20] in 1716, the theme is one foreign nation's atrocious behaviour perpetrated on another, the inference being that the Spaniards, although victors in Peru, were simply barbarians. Dryden wrote again of the connotations of opera and the connection with "foppery":

"This sight is to be seen
Near the street that's called Queen
    And the people have named it the Opera
But the Devil take my wife,
If all the days of my life
    I did ever see such a foppery!"[21]

This verse demonstrates the manner in which opera was viewed by him and his contemporaries, as he mocks the behaviour of the English audience and scorns the work. Social and national themes are to be the preoccupation of critical analysts of opera and at the heart of concerns about it.

Criticism of opera was not confined to Dryden. As early as 1659 the diarist John Evelyn espoused the inadequacies of the English Opera. He entered in his diary:

> "[went] next day to see a new *Opera*, after the *Italian* way ... much inferior to the Italian composure and magnificence: but what was prodigious, that in a time of such a publique Consternation, such a Vanity should be kept up or permitted."[22]

thus confirming the sentiment already well accepted in society that opera performed in England was an inferior product and equating its lack of success with its absence of magnificence.

On the return of Charles II, (1660-1685) Royal Patents were issued to Killegrew on 25th April 1662 and Davenant on 25th January 1663. These complicated rival patents, passed on through generations and venues, were to form the basis of English operatic history, as they became inextricably interwoven with the performance of opera in England from this moment forth. In 1673 a Royal Academy of Music was founded by Charles II in an attempt to institutionalise opera, however it foundered quickly. This 'model' was clearly based on French precepts to the extent that Cambert, the impresario to whom Louis XIV granted his first *privilège* in 1669, was appointed to manage it.[23]

It was also under the reign of Charles II that attendance at Italian opera became an integral part of the social requisites of English society. The relationship between the state and opera could not however afford to display such overt associations. Dent suggests the following reasons for this distinction and the following quotation reinforces the distinct nature of the relationship between the English state and institutions. Subvention is not an issue when power resides in the hands of one individual, but in England public expenditure was subjected to public scrutiny and thus was influenced by contemporary debate:

> "...when Charles II returned to assume the crown he would have been delighted to imitate all the grandeurs of the court of Versailles, if he could have persuaded the nation to pay for them. In other countries opera had begun to be one of the regular appurtenances of monarchy; it was essentially an entertainment for the glorification, rather than for the amusement, of royal and imperial houses."[24]

The connection between cultural and political intention was thus dependent upon the monarch's ability to impose his insignia and by extension that of the state's on opera. Charles II weakened by the recent political past shared his throne metaphorically with other representatives of power. However Price

points out that once Charles II had assured the royal succession and thus legitimised his dynasty in 1683, he "commanded a work in the style of Lully to celebrate his reign."[25] The reign of English opera was short lived and very soon it was generally perceived as an aristocratic pastime laden with foreign connotations to such an extent that even the suitability of English as an appropriate language for musical expression was questioned. In 1690, Henry Purcell in his *Dedication to Dioclesian* advances the view that the Italian language is unrivalled in musical terms:

> "... Poetry and Painting have arrived to their perfection in our own Country: Musick is yet but in its Nonage, a forward Child, which gives hope of what it may be hereafter in *England*, when the Masters of it shall find more Encouragement. 'Tis now learning *Italian*, which is its best Master ... Many of the Nobility and Gentry have follow'd Your Illustrious Example in the Patronage of Musick. Nay even our Poets begin to grow asham'd of their harsh and broken Numbers, and promise to file our uncouth Language into smoother Words."[26]

Such a viewpoint created a political as well as linguistic schism. Indeed the lively debate in the journals of the early 18th century focuses on questions of the appropriateness of English and the acceptance of Italian opera as a significant art in relation to its integration into the fabric of 18th century society. The relationship between the upper classes and Italian opera strengthened and English opera was not perceived to mean opera at all. There is much historical consensus of this view. Dent wrote that:

> "The Italian Opera in London was the entertainment of the nobility and gentry, and its theatre for two hundred years and more the exclusive resort of aristocratic society."[27]

and further suggested that such aristocratic preferences worked against the development of English opera as there would not be an appropriate public.

> "in view of the aristocratic preference for Italian opera there could be no hope for an English opera of a serious type."[28]

The central argument in this work is that such a preference for Italian opera had more to do with the fact that the meaning of English opera was strictly associated with the work, whereas Italian opera brought together all its elements to contribute to the full meaning of the term. This marks the first of a few notable exceptions in English opera's history. The most recent of these was the performance of Benjamin Britten's *Gloriana* on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne. In both instances state interests prevailed to present English opera to the world to demonstrate the cultural

attainment of the nation. By the turn of the century however English opera in the form of *The Prophetess* by Purcell was according to White:

> "looked on as a suitable vehicle for entertaining distinguished foreign visitors. Peter the Great was present at a performance on 15th January 1698, and two Alcaids, Envoys from the Emperor of Morocco on 1st June 1700"[29]

and by 1702 at the accession of Queen Anne Purcell's popularity had reached its height in London.

In 1704 the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket became its home. It was at this theatre designed initially by Sir John Vanbrugh and financed by "thirty persons of quality to subscribe £100 each"[30] (which underwent various name changes, razed by fire on two occasions, entirely re-built), that the performance of opera was largely associated up until the mid-19th century when its rôle was supplanted by Covent Garden.[31] It was not the only operatic venue in London, amongst others Drury Lane which at the beginning of the 18th century was managed by Christopher Rich also performed opera. It was however the Haymarket theatre which was to be associated in the minds of the aristocratic clientele as the theatre for Italian opera. The Lord Chamberlain's decree of 31 December 1707 served to establish opera firmly at the theatre in the Haymarket by eliminating competition from other venues:

> "...I do hereby order and require: All operas to be at the Haymarket, with full power to the manager to engage any performers in music, dancing, etc."[32]

This decree was important as the Haymarket was established to cater for an exclusive audience and the government aided its managers by legally protecting its monopoly. The actor manager Colley Cibber describes what at the time was understood by opera and what was understood to be an 'opera-going' public.

> "the Inclination of our People of Quality for foreign Operas, had now reach'd the Ears of *Italy*, and the Credit of their Taste had drawn over from thence,..."[33]

He explains the reason for Italian opera gaining such acceptance in society in terms of the 'fragility' of the form. This argument has been reiterated constantly as a justification for the special treatment of opera through the centuries until the present day:

> "Although the Opera is not a Plant of our Native Growth, nor what our plainer Appetites are fond of, and is of so delicate a Nature, that without excessive Charge it cannot live long among us;"[34]

and here in the continuation of his phrase, he acknowledged the volatile nature of debate it occasioned:

> "especially while the nicest *Connoisseurs* of Musick fall into such various Heresies in Taste, every Sect pretending to be the true one."[35]

It is in the light of the notion of an institution as perceived in England that an explanation of the invective and debate of early 18th century critics can be most clearly understood. The issues generated by perceiving opera as meaning an opera as opposed to the opera or opera are necessarily in conflict. Furthermore in order to define English opera's birthright, critics such as Steele and Addison developed arguments which confused the issue. It was not so much therefore that they held particularly strong views about the nature of Englishness' in opera, but rather that as social critics they took exception to the manner in which the alliances between political power and the operatic stage were seen to be evolving. If precedent determines law, then it was against the institutionalisation of an art which was supported by, and representative of, an opposing but strong political and socio/economic group which dominated the court and therefore by extension, the country.

Sir Richard Steele in *The Tatler* in 1709 highlighted the double standards of social demands and actual content of the performance of Italian Opera:

> "...I went on Friday last to the opera and was surprised to find a thin house at so noble an entertainment, till I heard that the tumbler was not to make his appearance that night."[36]

In 1709 he made further jibes at the state of opera at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, in *The Tatler*, 'Theatrical Intelligence' as follows:

> "Letters from the Haymarket inform us that on Saturday night last the opera of Pyrrhus and Demetrius was performed with great applause. ... That the understanding has no part in the pleasure is evident, from what these letters very positively assert, to wit, that a great part of the performance was done in Italian and a great critic fell into fits in the gallery at seeing, not only time and place, but languages and nations confused in the most incorrigible manner. ..."[37]

Here Steele developed his major arguments by suggesting that the presentation of opera in England had reached farcical proportions, for the manner in which the performance is described was intended to incite scorn directed at the audience, and thus by extension the nation. His argument is based on a defence requiring that the content of the work be well constructed in traditional theatrical terms. His description of it is designed to demonstrate

ıow farcical the results of this form of pasticcio performance were. It would ıppear however that the major focus or objection in his argument is devoted ɔ the fact that the work was sung in Italian.

Addison rises to the argument with his inimitable style when commenting ɔn opera sung in Italian on English stages, as well as the audience's (or ːritic's) attitude to this in his essay published in *The Spectator* on 21 March 711. There is occasion to reflect here on whether the wrath which Addison lirected towards Italian opera was not occasioned by the reception of his bretto *Rosamund* in 1707. Although in the vernacular and written for English ıudiences in an attempt to create a national opera it proved to be "a dismal ailure".[38] Nonetheless the following lively description of the state of opera ɔ England in the early 18th century sets out a very clear notion of his position ıighlighting his literary and linguistic concerns and transposing them into the lomain of the political, social and cultural relationship between England and ːs European counterparts.

> "It is my Design in this Paper to deliver down to Posterity a faithful Account of the Italian Opera, and of the gradual Progress which it has made upon the English Stage: For there is no question but our great Grand-children will be very curious to know the Reason why their Forefathers used to sit together like an Audience of Foreigners in their own Country, and to hear whole Plays acted before them in a Tongue which they did not understand...
>
> ...In the meantime I cannot forebear thinking how naturally a Historian who writes two or three hundred years hence and does not know the Taste of his wise Forefathers will make the following Reflection, 'In the beginning of the 18th century the Italian tongue was so well understood in England, that operas were acted on the public stage in that language.'
>
> One scarce knows how to be serious in the Confutation of an Absurdity that shows itself at first Sight. It does not want any great measure of sense to see the Ridicule of this monstrous Practice: but what makes it the more astonishing, it is not the taste of the rabble but of the persons of the greatest politeness, which has established it. ...
>
> At present our Notions of musick are so very uncertain, that we do not know what it is we like; only, in general, we are transported with anything that is not **English** - so it be of foreign growth, let it be **Italian**, **French** or **High-Dutch**, it is the same thing. In short, our English music is quite rooted out, and nothing yet planted in its stead."[39]

Addison's comment makes mention of all the major issues concerning pera in England. Firstly, he remarked upon the exclusivity of the audience, ointing out that there is a general lack of communication between the erformers and the public. He suggested that the reasons for frequenting such

a venue have little to do with the work performed and his derision of the practice of singing in foreign tongues has two elements associated with it. He concludes that because the audience is left without comprehension it serves little purpose to perform and also that it leaves the English as a nation open to ridicule not only by its contemporaries but also for future generations who would view it with the critical hindsight of historical comment.

In fact performances of opera in England had become so disparate as to be quite ludicrous. Since 1710, The King's Theatre and Drury Lane were both staging operas. Both their managements motivated by a need to captivate the largest and most exclusive public embarked upon a number of operatic experiments. Nalbach, a well reputed scholar of The King's Theatre, sums up the situation in the following manner:

> "And what polyglot experiments in opera – Italian opera in Italian, Italian operas in English, Italian arias with English recitative, and, most strange of all, Italian and English singers both singing in their respective languages in the same production!"[40]

Whatever the critiques by Addison and Steele, opera was enjoying considerable popularity and it was associated as having a tacit link to the court. By 1711, John Jacob Heidegger, manager of the Queen's Theatre and Master of the Revels for George II "kept the 'image' of the house as an institution of glamour in the eyes of its noble patrons."[41]

The tradition of mocking the Italian Opera and distrust of its Papist ties had now become rather fashionable and in 1729 Carey contributed the following verse full of the same sentiment and invective:

> "I hate this singing in an unknown Tongue,
> It does our Reason and our senses wrong;
> When Words construct, and Music cheers the Mind
> Then is the Art of Service to Mankind:
> But when a Castrate Wretch of monstrous size
> Squeakes out a Treble, shrill as Infant cries
> I curse the unintelligible Ass
> Who may, for ought I know, be saying Mass."[42]

Another attempt to institutionalise opera after the French fashion occurred between 1719-1728 when the company folded because of bankruptcy and 1729-1737 when it was named the Royal Academy of Music by the noblemen who created it and it was for this opera that Handel created most of his work. This Academy of Music is important in that it "marked the first serious attempt

o launch opera in England on a grand scale."[43] Perhaps an even more ;ignificant reason for its importance can be advanced here. George II 1727 - 1760), as Heidegger's patron, paid £1,000 per annum "to meet the extraordinary expenses of the opera"[44] and this overt association and ;ubvention from monarchy to the institution displays the opera's significance o the state and the importance of ensuring its continuity. Hitherto financial patronage was clearly the domain of the nobility but in this instance the ntervention of the monarch signified the opera's importance.

The 19th century theatrical historian George Hogarth comments upon the act that the opera had come to mean simply a place where the fashionable congregated:

> "The public, too, had begun to grow weary of an entertainment, the character and beauties of which were, as yet, but little understood in England, and which had been supported exclusively by the aristocracy, more for the sake of fashion than from any real taste for Italian music drama."[45]

In 1728 the same year as the first demise of The Royal Academy of Music an unique form of English opera occurred incorporating the popular unes of the day. This was called 'ballad opera'. Its origins are derived from a search for an indigenous form of the art and it has antecedents in the nasques of Dryden and Pope who form an impressive lineage in the history of opera in England. The ballad opera is at the heart of innovations in English opera and its one unmitigated success, *The Beggar's Opera*, greatly nfluenced the movement for English opera, that is opera written by English composers and librettists and sung in English. We shall see this tradition extending to 19th and 20th century composers and influencing such composers as Sir Arthur Sullivan, Vaughan Williams and to an extent Benjamin Britten in their search for an uniquely English form of Opera. *The Beggar's Opera* was a ballad opera written in English by John Gay and performed at a Royal Tennis Court in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The phenomenal success of this work was succeeded by no other comparable success and thus although emonstrating that opera could be sung in English, did not influence greatly ne opera in England. Furthermore, it is in a sense not strictly an operatic work but rather a compilation of ballads, and its themes are distinctly different om those traditionally associated with opera.

It could also be suggested that *The Beggars' Opera* is especially ;ignificant because of its association with John Rich who produced it at -incoln's Inn Fields. It was he, who on the basis of the success of this work,)uilt the first Theatre Royal at Covent Garden and thus created the site on vhich opera in England has been associated for the past 150 years. This is)f interest as it could be argued that English opera, that is opera written and ;ung in English, does have an historic significance for the nation, albeit ;ymbolic. The theatre constructed at Covent Garden and opened on 7th December 1732 was a playhouse of grand proportions and used the Theatre Royal Patent which Rich's father had bought from the estate of Sir Nilliam Davenant, who had received it from Charles II[46] and started an English' opera tradition.

By 1733 there were four predominant musical venues in London: Drury -ane, Covent Garden, Lincoln's Inn Fields and the Little Theatre in the Haymarket.[47] In 1734 the Opera of the Nobility was created, an Italian opera)rganised by the Neapolitan impresario Porpora and starring the famous :astrato Farinelli which played in opposition to Handel who had created an)pposing theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Heidegger soon became manager of his company which he brought to The King's Theatre and Handel was forced)ut to Covent Garden. Significantly George II and the Prince of Wales)atronised both these theatres.[48] These institutions were the opera which Addison and later on Johnson used as their benchmark for opera. They were 'enues in which Italian was the language used and due to the composition of heir patronage had a very distinctive social position. Thus they represented nore than an opera, and contained a complex iconography which could be :xtended to symbolise connections with the corridors of power. The works erformed reflected scenes of courtly love and noble values, reconciliation of)ve and glory, both moral and spiritual, and musical intervention of the spirits.

In 1737 both companies went bankrupt and the Licensing Act restricted he King's as the only theatre in which opera could be presented. Periodic erformances occurred at The King's Theatre between 1737 and 1741. By 741 a new syndicate of '30 gentlemen' tried to refound an opera company. his too was oppressed by debt and closed in 1744 and for a short period here was no formal operatic presence identifiable in England. Burney

lescribes the difficulty in remounting such a project in the prevailing political limate:

> "The rebellion (1745) broke out; all foreigners were regarded as dangerous to the State; the opera-house was shut up by order of the Lord Chamberlain; and it was with great difficulty and address that Lord Middlesex obtained permission to open it again".[49]

lowever by the season of 1745-46, Gluck had been contracted "as resident omposer for the King's"[50] and Handel's oratorios were revived in The laymarket in 1747. This is Burney's appraisal of the difficult situation based n fear and suspicion of foreigners which Gluck was to find himself in:

> "Gluck worked ... with fear and trembling, not only on account of the few friends he had in England, but from an apprehension of riot and popular fury at the opening of a theatre, in which none but papists and foreigners were employed."[51]

: is evident however that despite very brief interludes it had always been ossible to attend and even have a choice of operatic performances in the arly 18th century. This continuity and choice rather demonstrate the fallacy f the argument that opera has no or little place in English cultural history.

Indeed 'society' after half a century of operatic attendance was requiring ncreasingly inventive modes of operatic distraction and during the early 1750s alian opera's popularity amongst its previous benefactors waned. It was also lighted with frequently changing management and impresarios who ccasionally displayed the brilliance of earlier times.[52] The fortunes of The ing's Theatre thus diminished whilst other venues began to house and attract ignificant audiences to opera in London.

Samuel Johnson sets the tone of the debate for the mid-century with his equently used remark that Italian opera (in England) is "an exotic and rational entertainment"[53] White, Fiske and Johnson, amongst others, have larified that this statement has often been quoted out of context and taken to ean opera in general and not Italian opera in the early part of the 8th century which was very clearly Johnson's intention.[54] This clarification important as the misquotation of this phrase has been used by detractors f opera in general to demonstrate its short-coming. Johnson does however et forth a view which will be endorsed by almost all parties whichever side of e debate they support. Both adjectives are in fact being used in unusual, ecialised senses. Firstly 'exotic' suggests something deriving from foreign

;limes, thus setting much of the stage for arguments of the future generations. Secondly, the use of 'irrational' suggests something lurking below the conscious mind, uncontrollable and therefore perhaps dangerous.

Johnson was not the only critic to be publicly engaged in the critical debate. Lord Chesterfield highlights the continued social correctness of going to the opera when in a letter to his son he unequivocally states his view of the social usefulness of opera as paraphrased by Henry Raynor in *Music in England*:

> "if art had any intellectual or spiritual value, there was nothing to the 'man of fashion' who attended the opera or listened to other music for no more pleasant relaxation and because his position in society demanded that he attend."[55]

Thus there was a participation by more than simply the aristocracy in musical representation in England. The popularity of English opera can be viewed in this light along with the success of such composers as Thomas Arne and Dibden. It is interesting that as soon as Arne was assured of his popular success he tried to transform his work into a product for The King's Theatre.

A most eloquent connection between opera and the state is commented on by the 19th century French opera historian Castil-Blaze. He describes the night of 22nd February 1781 when the two Vestris were in London. That very day Edmund Burke was due to present his economic bill. Lord Nugent however preferred an evening at the opera to the affairs of state and annulled the passage of the bill on that day.[56]

It can be seen that throughout the first part of the 18th century opera was consistently performed in London. The opera was sometimes represented by two companies and there was a choice of venues restricted only by royal decree. The opera was supported by the monarch, nobility and a merchant class. Opera took various forms and was most often thought of as 'Italian', although that did not always mean a work entirely sung in Italian nor with Italian singers. Perhaps most significantly opera was not a rare fruit but an everyday part of theatrical life at least for a certain social class in English society.

The popularity of the Ballad Opera has also been considered. This however was less integrated into the mainstream and in general perceived as being more akin to musical theatre. The Italian Opera represented high culture

ınd was associated with high society and embodied all three levels of an ›pera, the opera and opera and Ballad Opera represented low culture, ıeaning only an opera into which the upper class occasionally made forays ɔr diverse reasons.

Thus by the end of the 18th century opera was popular in London and no ɔnger associated exclusively with one venue. The schisms of thought oncerning opera in the domains of language, nationality and the associated ıttitudes of social behaviour linked with class and connotations of high and low ulture, had been declared. It was out of this climate that the 19th century rew upon its past in order to create new theatres and introduce innovations ı all aspects of opera. Most importantly however opera was still to be ominated by the unresolved debates dating from opera's beginnings which ow incorporated a tradition of criticism and thought developed by the foremost ritics of the century.

3.1.2 France

Opera was first brought to France from Italy by Cardinal Mazarin in 1645 ɔr performance before the Queen to a select audience. That Mazarin's ıotives for this action were "very largely political"[57] is generally cknowledged by historians. He did however, achieve, a significant beginning ɔr what was to become before the end of the century, the art most reflecting ıe state politique both by the works themselves, its venue, and its public.

By the time Louis XIV had reached his majority and revolutionised the ıeaning of monarchy, the creation of a national image was compounded by ıe weight of its artistic individuality and splendour. Opera was to become a erfect vehicle through which the politics of absolutism were to make inroads to the cultural visage of the state.[58]

Opera was legitimised by Royal *privilège* published on 28th June, 1669. his document is important. It identified unequivocally the reasons for the troduction of opera into France. It was primarily a matter of national pride:

> "...depuis quelques années les Italiens ont establi diverses *Académies* dans lesquelles ils se fait des Représentations en musique qu'on nomme *Opéra*: Que ces *Académies* estant composées des plus excellens Musiciens du Pape et autres Princes, mesme de personnes d'honnestes familles, nobles et gentils-hommes de naissance, très-savans et expérimentez en l'art de la Musique, qui y vont chanter, sont à présent les plus beaux spectacles et les plus agréables

> divertissemens, non seulement des villes de Rome, Venise et autres cour d'Italie, mais encore ceux des villes et cours d'Allemagne et d'Angleterre, où les dites *Académies* on ésté pareillement establies à l'imitation des Italiens; ..."[59]

Thus not only did the text of the edict make reference to the fact that opera had its source in Italian principalities representing both temporal and spiritual power and was frequented and appreciated by a cultivated and noble public, but it also drew attention to the fact that it was imitated by France's great rivals, Germany and England. The intention was therefore not only to integrate opera into France, but also to divest opera of any Italian authority. Opera was to be formally cultivated in France not as an Italian import but as a French Academy (*Académie d'Opéra*), central to the French State, and additionally a source of French national pride. In this *privilège* the importance the state placed on the rôle of the French language in national culture is specifically identified:

> "...et enfin que s'il nous plaisoit luy accorder la permission d'establir dans nostre Royaume de pareilles *Académies* pour y faire chanter en public de pareils *Opéra* où représentations en musique et en langue françoise..."[60]

So that the state's rôle as a pre-eminent cultural and political power be recognised, the requirement that French opera should emulate the attributes of Italian opera is stressed:

> "...des *Académies* composées de tel nombre et qualité de personnes qu'il avisera, pour y représenter et chanter en public des *Opéra* et Représentations en musique et en vers françois, pareilles et semblables à celles d'Italie."[61]

This *privilège* was refined further, and the importance of opera to the state clarified, when it was given to Jean-Baptiste Lully in the *lettres patentes* on 9th March, 1672. The new *privilège* commences with an acknowledgement of opera's importance in terms of its position in relation to the state:

> "Les sciences et les arts estant les ornements les plus considerables des Estats..."[62]

The 'Académie' becomes the 'Royal Academy' (*Académie Royale*) thus further linking it with the state as something more than an 'ornament' but as a valuable state asset upon the scene of which state interests could be promoted with all the pomp and ceremony the court desired.[63]

Lully's *privilège* is distinct from the first *privilège* of 1669 in that it allows for opera to be performed in languages other than French.

"Nous avons au dit sieur Lully, permis ... d'establir une Académie Royalle de musique dans nostre bonne ville de Paris. ... des pièces de musique qui seront composées, tans en vers françois, qu'autres langues estrangeres, pareilles et semblables aux Académies d'Italie..."[64]

'hus Louis XIV in 1669 first created a French opera and by 1672, in an ıterval of only three years confident of having established the French tone nd ascendence of its national opera, incorporated opera sung in foreign ıanguages into the repertory in the form of a new *privilège.*

It is here that we will turn again to the development of the operatic debate ı France, noting that the English debate during the 17th and 18th centuries ɔcused on the areas of language, nationalism and grandness and an nderstanding of the institution in a fashion peculiar to, and reflecting the ower structure of, the English State. In France during this same period, peratic concerns appeared to be based on different premises, and in all robability emanated from renaissance precepts of musical philosophy which ombined a vision of harmony reflected in music and were enjoined to ɔntemporary *réal politique.* These relied very heavily on illusions of ɔlendour to reinforce power.

Certainly the lineage of these ideas can be traced and transposed into ıe opera as presented by the *Académie Royale de Musique* and it lends eight to the eruption of philosophical and linguistic quarrels so soon after its ception. The firm arm of absolutism waning in France, criticism about the ɔle and nature and to an extent the allegiance of opera became prevalent. ılly organised and ran the *Académie Royale de Musique* in an autocratic anner much resembling that by which Louis XIV ruled his kingdom. Dissent as for the most part quashed, as contenders could not enter the realm. 'gument about opera therefore focused on themes other than musical and ıd at its heart a desire to combat the exclusivity and autocratic autonomy, not ıly of the Academy, but also metaphorically of the state.

Lully and later Rameau were to be labelled as turncoats and political ıwns by the protagonists of Italian Opera. It was as if what they composed ıs seen to take on a much greater significance than that of musical ;pression. It could be suggested that it was as much these composers' ınnection with the crown and the institutions of the crown, as their

ompositions of French Opera, which instigated the depth of venom that was irected both at them and at their work.

In 1702 the Abbé François de Raguenet published the *Parallèle des aliens et des français en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéras*,[65] the first f many treatises concerning the relationship between French and Italian)pera and the nature of musical expression and dramatic action in which he upported Italian Opera. He thus opened up the century in France with the ssues which would preoccupy it in literary terms. Opera was to become the ocal point of three pamphlet wars[66] during the century which used the elationship between Italy and France as a pretext for literary, philosophical nd political debate by the greatest writers and intellectuals of the period.

Raguenet highlighted the central paradox in the French/Italian debate, hich renders the actual argument irrelevant by focusing upon the actual rigins of Lully's birth and the obvious irony that he, by birth an Italian, is eemed the originator of all that is great in French *tragédie lyrique*.

> "We are daily admiring Lully's fertile genius in the composition of so many beautiful different airs. France never produced a master that had a talent like him; this I'm sure no one will contradict, and this is all I desire to make it appear how much the Italians are superior to the French, both for the invention and composition, for, in short, this great man, whose works we set in competition with those of the greatest masters in Italy, was himself an Italian. He has excelled all our musicians in the opinion of the French themselves. To establish, therefore, an equality between the two nations, we ought to produce some Frenchman who has in the same manner excelled the greatest masters in Italy, and that by the confession of the Italians themselves; but this is an instance we have not yet been able to produce."[67]

aguenet also perceived the importance of grandness as being part of the eaning of opera itself. By lending Italian Opera his unequivocal support, he corporated notions of the opera as being an essential part of the meaning of e word:

> "To conclude, all the Italian decorations and machines are much better than ours; their boxes are more magnificent; the opening of the stage higher and more capacious; our painting, compared to theirs, is no better than daubing; you'll find among their decorations, statues of marble and alabaster that may view with the most celebrated antiques in Rome; palaces, colonnades, galleries, and sketches of architecture superior in grandeur and magnificence to all the buildings in the world..."[68]

aguenet's assertions were not uncontested. In 1704 Jean Laurent le Cerf de Vieville, Seigneur de Freneuse published the first part of *Comparaison de musique italienne et de la musique française* followed in 1705 by a further

ddition amalgamating the *Traité du bon goût de la musique* in which he efended French opera.[69] These arguments seemingly about the scendence of French and Italian opera over each other appear at their face alue absurd, and yet their rôle in the development of opera in France is ucial to its development in all the senses of the word. This demonstrable nity: moral, social and political was the quintessence of Versailles and the bsolutist state of Louis XIV.[70]

Thus it is suggested that the schism of thought surrounding opera at the rn of the 18th century coincided with and represented the devolution of ower from the absolutist state. This enabled social critics to use opera as a etaphor to explore the changing political structures within French society. loreover in 1749 the *Privilège* of the Opéra was given, by Louis XV 715-1774) to the City of Paris, thus divesting the monarchy of its financial sponsibility for the institution at a time when the monarchy was clearly losing s previously tight hold on the reigns of power.

By mid-century the debate took on the form of a theoretical battle in the ise of a pamphlet war entitled *La Querelle des Bouffons*. It was so named s an Italian company called the Bouffons performed *La Serva Padrona*, a ork by Pergolese on 1st August 1752. It was the performance of this piece nd the presence of the 'Bouffons' in Paris, where they remained for two ears, which served as the focus of the argument between the two sides. The hemence of this debate is attested to by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of e chief advocates of Italian opera. Commenting on the level of sentiment rrounding the debate he wrote:

> "les bouffons firent à la musique italienne des spectateurs très ardents. Tous Paris se divisa en deux partis plus échauffés que s'il se fut agi d'une affaire d'Etat ou de réligion. L'un, plus puissant, plus nombreux, composé des grands, des riches et des femmes, soutenait la musique française; l'autre, plus vifs, plus fier, plus enthousiaste, était composé des vrais connaisseurs, des gens à talent, des hommes de génie."[71]

usseau's position is indicative of the essentially political character of the *erelle* as he clearly delineates the two camps in socio/political terms, not sical.[72]

Grimm who sided with Rousseau and the Encyclopedists wrote a parody opera in Paris in 1753 entitled *The Little Prophet of Boehmischbroda* which rided the French Opera establishment. In it he acknowledged one of the

ıost significant precepts of opera when as consolation to the losers (i.e. rench opera) the prize of national glory is offered: "And your glory will be ɜsplendent on every side, and I myself will spread it among the nations; you ill be called the people above all others, and you will have no equal, and I ıall not tire of looking upon you because it will be pleasing to me to see ɔu."[73] Thus one of the fundamental meanings of opera, a meaning which lows it to be used by whichever party is ascendent, is glory. It is inextricably ıked with opera and states notoriously seek and feed off glory. They strive unite symbolic metaphors of glory with the rationale of their government.

In 1753, Rousseau virtually opened his work, *Lettre sur la musique ançaise* with an acknowledgment of national notions of opera and makes ference to the operatic scene in Europe while advancing the same cultural ıauvinism or desire for greatness which inspired Louis XIV to proclaim his ɜry first *privilège*. Rousseau argues that the French language when sung ves rise to derision and thus a less than noble perception of the French ate; the Lullists/Ramistes the opposite. What is important is that national ide is seen to be displayed by the opera and thus it is empowered to make break the image of a nation:

> "Les Allemands, les Espagnols et les Anglais ont longtemps prétendu posséder une musique propre à leur langue: en effet ils avaient des opéras nationaux[74] qu'ils admiraient de très bonne foi, et ils étaient bien persuadés qu'il y allait de leur gloire à laisser abolir ces chefs-d'oeuvre insupportables à toutes les oreilles, excepté les leurs. Enfin le plaisir l'a emporté chez eux sur la vanité, ou du moins ils s'en sont fait une mieux entendue de sacrifier au goût et à la raison des préjugés qui rendent souvent les nations ridicules par l'honneur même qu'elles y attachent.
> Nous sommes encore en France, à l'égard de notre musique, dans les sentiments où ils étaient alors sur la leur; mais qui nous assurera que, pour avoir été plus opiniâtres, notre entêtement en soit mieux fondé?"[75]

ımm too reinforces this point in which he attacks opera for being an ɜtitutional extravagance, rather than a place of performance: "And in the rdness of your hearts you have created an opera which has wearied me for ənty-four years and which is the laughingstock of Europe to this day. And your opinionated extravagance you have erected an Academy of Music, hough it is none, which I have never recognised."[76] The battle was not ly confined to literary or theatrical spheres. The supporters of the Italian ıera were seen to be aligned with the interests of the Queen, and the ɔporters of the French Opera were aligned with the King. The *Querelle* in

ct provided a forum for these philosophers to expound their social and olitical theories intermingled with comments on notions of harmony and elody. It served as a convenient mask for the beginnings of a new age of ought. As the *Querelle des Bouffons* was regarded as a vehicle for one of e great debates of the enlightenment it can be interpreted as being such.

In 1755 Francesco Algarotti wrote *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* (Essay n the Opera) which provides a different assessment of the operatic situation France at the time. He describes the nature of opera in France since its eginnings using the denominating terms of "magnificence, "pomp", plendour", "extravagance" and "decoration", as if he is in no doubt as to the eaning of the term. He too sees the rivalry over Italian and French opera as aving a symbolic political connection:

> "No means could be hit on by our artists to make their execution agreeable to Gallic ears and the Italian melody was abhorred by them as much as had been, in former times, an Italian regency."[77]

riting in 1770, the English music historian Charles Burney takes a practical ther than philosophical view of the nature of the musical rift between France nd Italy:

> "The truth is, the French do not like Italian music; they pretend to adopt and admire it; but it is all mere affectation."[78]

ne Italian position taken up by Rousseau and the Encyclopedists, it has been own, had at its heart political motivations and *The Serva Padrona* served as vehicle by which they could debate their philosophical viewpoints.

The fact that the *Querelle des Bouffons* was barely dormant when a new eratic debate erupted in Paris, lends support to the view that these debates ere merely a pretext for other causes. The Gluckist/Piccinist squabble would first glance appear to be a deliberately staged quarrel.

Gluck, having composed *Iphigénie en Aulide* for the Paris Opéra in 1774 as presented with a libretto by Calzabigi of *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Piccini, a opolitan composer brought to Paris under the protection of Marie-Antoinette as given the same task to undertake and thus united under virtually the same g both in support of it as in the *Querelle des Bouffons* they divided the risian operatic world into two more camps dealing with issues of modernity

ıd antiquity along the lines of the very first great operatic debate. Burney escribes the debate in the following passage:

> "Party runs as high among poets, musicians and their adherents, at Vienna as elsewhere. Metastasio and Hasse, may be said, to be at the head of the principal sects; and Calzabigi and Gluck of another. The first regarding all innovations as quackery, adhere to the ancient form of the musical drama, in which the poet and the musician claim equal attention from the audience; the bard in the recitatives and the narrative parts; and the composer in the airs, duos, and choruses. The second party depend more on theatrical effects, propriety of character, simplicity of diction, and of musical execution, than on, what they style, flowery descriptions, superfluous similes, sententious and cold morality on one side, with tiresome symphonies, and long divisions, on the other."[79]

ıe quarrel was very much between Gluck representing Italian Opera and the ench school of so-called italianate opera which had been influenced by the ıcyclopedists to look for a new simplicity in opera as opposed to the older yle Italian opera with few French references to taste represented by Piccini. luck transcends the petty nature of the debate aligning himself with ɔusseau in search of the creation of music over nationalism:

> "With the help of the famous M. Rousseau of Geneva, whom I intended to consult, we might together in seeking a noble, moving and natural melody with a declamation in keeping with the prosody of each language and the character of each people, have succeeded in finding the medium I have in mind for producing music that is suited to all nations and in eliminating the absurd distinctions between national forms of music."[80]

ıus it can be seen that the debate surrounding French opera not only has its ɔts in the art itself but stems from the very depths of its reason for existence, mely that it is a theoretical position put into practice. The operatic debates til the French Revolution had been essentially spurred on by intellectuals ıo used the opera as a forum to vent philosophical views on harmony and elody, language, nationalistic concepts and political precepts.

The nature of the debate would change during the Revolution and opera ıuld be expected to demonstrate its utility to the state politic. The institution eated under royal *privilège* 120 years previously was interpreted by the ımmunards as being a place of great industry and manual labour and thus vorthy symbol of state. J.J. Le Roux, a municipal officer and administrator public establishments charged by the Commune to investigate whether the éra was a necessary state institution raised some significant questions. stly he asked "What is the Opéra?" His answer is indicative of the way in

hich the opera as an institution lends itself easily to any rhetorical allusion of :ate:

> "Il offre la réunion de plusieurs arts et embrasse tous les genres dramatiques. Il a une réputation solidement établie et inspire un enthousiasme soutenu depuis plus d'un siècle. Tout y porte l'empreinte d'une magie inconnue: il procure une espèce d'ivresse par son action sur les sens. Mais il produit promptement la satiété et, de plus, on n'y peut rien souffrir de faible: il faut que chant, danse, orchestre, décors, rien ne laisse a désirer. La scène de l'Opéra n'admet que les chefs d'oeuvre. Que de soins pour arriver a une représentation, que de repétitions pénibles et multiples, que de labeur de la part des artistes et des ouvriers!"[81]

ıus in this instance opera is seen to mean a laborious enterprise on the part artists and workers. However it is in answer to the following question: Is in the interest of the capital and of the political mores to save the Opéra?, at Le Roux uses a reasoning which resembles very closely the *privilèges* of ɔuis XIV. It starts off by stating that the criteria of the *ancien régime* cannot ɛ the criteria of the Revolution:

> "Nous ne dirons plus comme *sous le règne des abus* - l'ancien régime - que l'Opéra est le plus beau spectacle d'Europe, qu'il attire les étrangers en foule, qu'il contribue à la gloire des français et que, quelque dépense qu'il occasionne, il est de la grandeur de la France de le soutenir."[82]

ɔwever the criteria appear to be very similar citing an argument made familiar usage that it brings capital from abroad (notably England) and that money useful to the state. Its reasoning is essentially 'modern' based on capitalist inciples. The opera generates work and is an industry which provides ltural prestige and monetary exchange:

> "il assure l'existence de plus de 500 personnes employées, sans parler de celles en nombre incalculable dont il favorise le commerce et l'industrie.
>
> L'Opéra dépense annuellement quelque 1 100 000 livres. Cette somme, dont la majeur partie est fournie volontairement par des gens aisés, passe en fractions dans les milliers de mains, artistes, auteurs, compositeurs, ouvriers...
>
> Il attire les curieux de tous les points du royaume et de l'étranger, surtout d'Angleterre, et ceux-ci séjournent ainsi à Paris et y engagent de nombreuse dépenses qui *fécondent* la capitale. On disait autrefois que l'Opéra faisait circuler 20 millions de livres dans Paris; on peut évaluer cette somme aujourd'hui à 8 millions dont un tiers provient des étrangers et un tiers de la province.
>
> L'Opéra est une pépinière d'artistes de tous genres dont le talent rayonne en province et en Europe. Ses ouvrages sont imprimiés et vendus partout."[83]

it could be argued that in essence the opera has not changed through this riod of social turmoil. What is different here is the criteria used with which assess it. The language which justifies it has changed its terms from

ıilosophic or literary to economic. As opera can be seen to fulfil its function ɔonomically it is charged to remain as a part of the new order and enables ɛ Roux to conclude that:

> "... il est non seulement utile mais bien indispensable à la Commune et cette dernière se doit de l'aider.
>
> Abandonner en ce moment l'Opéra, ce serait faire le jeu des ennemis de la Révolution. Ne penserait-on pas que la fortune publique est en danger? Quant aux étrangers ils iraient se fixer sous d'autres cieux."[84]

ıus it can be concluded that Le Roux, diligent servant of the Revolution, und within opera a symbol of continuity which should be preserved and ıpported by the state.

The reader should be reminded that the 18th century in France was ıquestionably a period of tremendous political and social upheaval. At the ɛginning of the century the country was governed by an absolutist monarchy, ıderwent the throes of Revolution and closed as an Empire and with a new ɔlitical and social order. Opera acted, reacted, and was integrated, into these ıenomenal political and social developments and at each stage it was used the dominant power as a symbolic representation of the state. This at first ance appears remarkable given the disparate foundations and aims of each t the opera proved to be most adept in the rôle of chameleon of public ɜtitutions and as such, an asset to the promotion of the legitimacy of cendant regimes.

It is also essential to recognise that opera was also used by intellectuals ıo were vying for a political place in a hitherto closed society as a ɛtaphoric battleground upon which the great thematic debates of the era uld be exposed. In this sense opera took on the greatest meaning of the ɪrd: a performance, a building, a political construct, all of these were allenged and yet the institution remained consistent to itself and permanent oughout.

! Aspects of opera in the 19th century

Historians are agreed that during the 19th century the western world derwent significant changes in social, political and cultural domains.[85] The tural atmosphere in which the 18th century was steeped, dominated by ɛllectuals and aristocracy, was substantially affected by the industrialisation

Europe, the rise of the middle-class, and a vast re-ordering of social and ɔlitical structures. The absolute or constitutional regimes based on premises divine right or feudal fealty had been toppled either through the processes social, or economic, revolution. A new pluralistic society influenced by the ;hievements of science and technology and fired by an overwhelming passion r expansion and discovery, replaced them. Great demographic shifts ;curred as a by-product of the infrastructure which was designed to facilitate ɔmmunication. Moral and social codes in turn reflected the significant ɔcio/economic restructuring founded on the precepts of the new age. This ;ction will investigate the manner and extent to which opera, society and the ate, interacted in order to test whether the great changes which occurred had ıy real effect on opera.

The new age was characterised by improved communications - a word ıich has two distinct meanings. In the first sense, there were fundamental anges in travel brought about by the construction of the railways. In the cond sense there was a rapid improvement in the transmission of ormation. This was marked by the influence of newspapers which were ;tributed via the new railroad networks and became a vehicle which affected inion over vast distances. Both these facets of the new modes of mmunication were greatly to affect what was a less rigid world. Gruneissen mments on the direct impact which increased facility of transport as well as ɜater access of information had on the opera audience:

> "The cessation of the exclusive reign of fashion over opera dates from the introduction, and extension of the railroad system. True, what is called 'The Season' remains, ... but there is now a miscellaneous public, native and foreign, which during this brief period forms the audiences of the opera house, quite independently of the regular subscribers, who by the way, favour, in these days, the stalls infinitely more than the private boxes."[86]

laments that the exclusivity of the opera has been violated. The "railroad ;tem" brought with it a new audience undoubtedly informed of events by the wspapers.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 well illustrates the spirit of this age. It ıonstrates the proliferation of new technological advances as well as ɔmoting in no uncertain terms claims of national advancement. It is nificant that one of the major notions behind this extraordinary ıonstration of international technological innovation and exchange was

ational promotion. Not only were foreigners invited to come and marvel at e achievements of Britain and her dominions but English citizens of all asses were also to realise, through this exhibition, the greatness and stability their society. Its timing, soon after the great continental upheavals of 1848 emonstrates a wilful decision to communicate the notion of political stability hich in turn translates into economic success. England was not untouched political upheaval and indeed the year of the Great Exhibition was blighted the uncertainty of leadership within legislative government. The Crown owever was not challenged, and neither were the fundamental structures of e state. Internal political squabbles, however disruptive to a legislative ocess, do not constitute insurrection.

The social evolution of the proletariat and the mass created a need for w distinctions to be made between the rôles and meaning of 'high' and 'low' lture. The increase in urban dwellers created a great market. These asses required entertainment venues and because of their swelling ranks on popularised much of the entertainment industry. Not only was the rise this new class important on a social and economic level but they also used a fundamental change in the 19th century entertainment industry. New nues were designed for their needs and the smaller, older houses came to present not only the last bastion of an old world but also were to be symbolic presentations of admittance into a new social class. By buying a bscription to a box at the opera, the purchaser was also attempting to buy *entrée* into society. The transition however was not an easy one. In the rly part of the century numerous commentators lamented what they rceived to be the changing tone of the 19th century house, fearing that era had lost its traditional meaning. For example, the opera manager njamin Lumley was concerned that the very nature of the opera audience d thus perhaps the meaning of the opera itself had been altered by such a ange of clientele:

> "The changes which have overspread modern society, vast and manifold as they are admitted to be, are perhaps nowhere more perceptible than in the region known as the Operatic world. ... The Opera House - once the resort and the 'rendezvous' of the *élite* of rank and fashion ... now mainly depends for support upon a miscellaneous and fluctuating audience."[87]

ɔreover Lumley believed that opera was in a sense devalued having lost its clusiveness:

> "The Opera then, once among the prominent features of London life with the nobility, no longer fills the same important space in the circle of 'the season's' enjoyments ... So that, as a sociable resort of a class whose members incline to somewhat exclusive habits among themselves, the Opera has ceased to offer those agreeable facilities for semi-public, semi-private intercourse, once so valued by our aristocracy."[88]

ıch a devaluation was not to be. Opera quickly regained its exclusive nature the monarchy, aristocracy and new industrialists turned to it again to display ɛir wealth and meet with each other. The critic Hermann Klein referring to ɛ opera audience in the latter part of the century clearly was in little doubt to what kind of audience attended the opera:

> "Thus the whole attraction of the opera house as a centre of social intercourse for the highest folk in the land was concentrated in and around the auditorium."[89]

e critics Hazlitt and George Bernard Shaw have both contributed many a ɲark on this element of opera going. Indeed Shaw's remark about 'the ;play of diamonds' has become a much quoted phrase in reference to the dience.

The relationship between the artist and the state or patron also changed ring the century. The artist demanded and won individual recognition and ɛ state built grander public monuments than before. Buildings endorsed by ɛ state began to carry the name of their architects; the rôle of the opera ɲposer became more distinct and the rôle of the conductor was invented d eulogised and invested with a singular value in terms of identification with ɛ state. Obvious examples of this relationship in France are the *'Eiffel'* tower d the Palais *'Garnier'*. In England, the Crystal Palace does not carry the ɲe of its architect although Joseph Paxton personifies the values of the ;torian era and his rise from nursery man to national hero is never ɡlected, always well documented and common knowledge. Great ıductors identified with national institutions such as Costa at Covent Garden ɲonstrate a shift in priorities. Increasing value was given to the cult of the a, and the century provides numerous examples of great operatic singers ;h as Jenny Lind, Malibran, the de Rezkes and Melba, to name a few.

Thus it can be seen that the 19th century can be regarded as the ɡinning of a significant new era. In a nutshell, the world was shrinking fast,

ıanging shape and pace and the central paradox of the era was to be played ıt by nations which at one and the same time turned inwards politically as rvent nationalism gained ground and yet outwards through the promotion of ıde, spurred on by anti-protectionist and expansionist economic theories and actice. These in turn encouraged the exchange of information and mmunication of technological advancement and made for a combustive cial and political environment.

It would appear, however, that initially the institution of opera remained pervious to these radical shifts within society. As the 19th century opened ere was no immediate rupture in perceptions of opera, and opera-going bits remained constant. The Marxist historian E.J. Hobsbawm suggests that an extent this continuity is explicable because:

> "The fundamental style of aristocratic life and art remained rooted in the eighteenth century, though considerably vulgarized by an infusion of sometimes ennobled nouveaux-riches;"[90]

also makes the point that opera's traditional meaning remained challenged because those who had inextricable links with its symbolic eaning little trusted other outlets of artistic expression, stating that:

> "between the 1789 and the 1848 Revolutions, princes were only too often suspicious of the non-operatic arts."[91]

e social historian, Mackerness, suggests that the continuity which opera d opera-going demonstrated departed from the changes of musical activity ich occurred concurrently. He suggests that what separated opera from ıer musical forms was, in a sense, its continuity and stability of meaning and ıs its imperviousness to radical social change:

> "...during the early decades [of the century] the pattern of opera production in this country showed very little change and was hardly affected by the influences so far discussed."[92]

s remark clearly illustrates the verity of the central hypothesis that opera ers from the other arts simply because its essential meaning is extraneous concepts of 'an opera' and encompasses greater conceptual fields. Opera's *dus operandi* was motored by changes in the actual power structure of the te and the ways in which its representatives wished to demonstrate their ıition both metaphorically and socially, and certainly not be influenced, as

curately noted by Mackerness, by changes in musical and general ciological trends.

We turn now to specific aspects of operatic life in England and France ring this century of change.

3.2.1 England

Operatic life in England in the early 19th century diversified. There was proliferation of venues and forms of operatic spectacle, ranging from Italian era and Pasticcio to English Opera. Notions of prestige dictated which kind venue and what kind of performance one attended. The monarchy and istocracy continued to frequent the Italian Opera and its ranks were swelled the upper echelons of middle class society. This created a source of nsiderable rivalry between theatres for the privilege of mounting it and ofiting from the associations between the venue and its public. Indeed the amour of these events increased due to the injection of new blood which pported the old values displaying them whenever possible and fashion was tated from the top of the social pecking order as described by Hobsbawm:

> "the picture of Royal or Imperial Majesties graciously attending opera or ball, surmounting expanses of jewelled, but strictly well-born gallantry and beauty."[93]

As in the 18th century, the satirical strain of the English intellectual class ntinued to deride opera in journals and yet at the same time it was knowledged by them to be an important part of its cultural composition. The alry between England and the continent continued in the form of the ditional debate about the relative merits of English opera. The following icle from the *Morning Chronicle* 1802 exemplifies this view:

> "The united world could not display such a body of talent as was combined in the King's Theatre last night; and it was almost all English. The first woman was an Englishwoman. The leader of the band was an Englishman. An Englishman was at the harpsichord. The bassoons (the best in the world) were English. The French horns (also the first in the world) were English. It showed that if the people of fashion would resolve to give their united protection to the Opera, and not divert their patronage to triflings, that can only serve to reduce London to the contemptible state of a mere colony, instead of being a metropolitan seat of the arts, there is no splendour to which we might not bring this as a national theatre."[94]

e critic William Hazlitt further contributed to the debate which centred on estioning opera's utility in England:

"The Opera is a fine thing: the only question is, whether it is not too fine. It is the most fascinating, and at the same time the most tantalising of all places. It is not the TOO LITTLE, but the TOO MUCH, that offends us.[95]

ıis critique demonstrates that perceptions of opera had not greatly changed ıce the early 18th century when Addison and Steele criticised the Italian era on similar grounds and in a similar fashion. Furthermore he introduced ɜ tone of moral aestheticism, the notion of its separateness from the other :s:

"When the Opera first made its appearance in this country, there were strong prejudices entertained against it, and it was ridiculed as a species of the mock heroic. The prejudices have worn out with time, and the ridicule has ceased; but the grounds for both remain the same in the nature of the thing itself."[96]

ızlitt in fact seems to suggest that this is a fundamental dilemma in the atment of opera. It would appear that what he means by opera however is entity which is aristocratic, exclusive and Italian.

It was prestige and maintenance of exclusivity which distinguished opera m other musical activities which re-enforced its position and continued ɔcess. The paradox remains however, that in a society increasingly inclined follow the paths of the politics and theories of economic rationalism, a tural institution based on entirely other precepts was plainly maintained by ɜocial class prepared to support it in order to endorse a construct which nified its order, conservatism and ceremonial purpose.

As the demand for entertainment increased and tastes diversified in the ·ly part of the century the English theatrical scene reflected these changes ɪ the venues themselves were accommodated to the requirements of the e by expanding in size and configuration for new audiences. The traditional ɜratic venues of the Italian opera were also affected and underwent, over hirty year period, a restructuring not only of capacity, but the inclusion of hnical innovations which in themselves were harbingers of the new ustrial age. The Haymarket was razed by fire in 1789, Covent Garden fered the same fate and was reconstructed in 1792, Drury Lane was re-built 794. In a five month period between September 1808 and January 1809 Covent Garden and then Drury Lane was destroyed by fire. Covent ·den was reconstructed within a year and Drury lane was re-opened in 1812 l presented a serious challenge to the former theatre. This constant razing

ıd reconstruction of theatres allowed for the technical innovations of the era be incorporated into the newly constructed venues. Innovations such as ıs lighting became an important element in these new auditoria. The chnology was now available with which to undertake the construction of ıildings which would cater for a greater audience capacity. So the larger ıdience, taken from a larger sector of society could now effectively regard ıelf with increased ease and became an even greater part of the operatic ıectacle.

The diversification of venues encompassing larger audiences of more sparate tastes lead to the serious development of more forms of opera than ıply 'Italian'. By the 1820s three non-Italian venues: Covent Garden, Drury ıne, and The Lyceum, were vying for ascendance in the non-traditional but ewly awakened operatic climate.[97] This popularity created an increased ımand for English opera and the investigation of modes of financing it by creasing attendance and changing the structure of the auditorium. Managers ıd exponents of this movement also began actively to seek government ıbvention.[98] Moves towards the creation of an operatic venue with the press purpose of the promotion of national composers, singers and ısicians were gaining ground by the 1830s.

1843 is an important year in British theatre history for the Act for egulating Theatres was passed. This Act finally broke the monopoly of 'royal eatres' and the last barrier was thus removed between the legalistic and mal restriction of theatrical and operatic representation. It did not challenge, wever, the Lord Chamberlain's rôle as censor and the holder of this office ntinued to maintain and exercise significant power in that domain. This uation was not changed until 1968 when the Theatres Act finally revoked ese powers.[99] White suggests that the effects of this Act on Italian Opera re also substantial:

> "If the two patent theatres lost their monopoly of spoken drama, then Her Majesty's (formerly the King's Theatre), which for about a hundred and forty years had enjoyed a special licence to present Italian opera and *ballets d'action*, lost that monopoly too. The almost immediate result was that, ... Covent Garden Theatre decided to turn itself into an opera house ... and in the course of time the success of Covent Garden in its new role led to the decline and eclipse of the older theatre."[100]

The fundamental area of distinction which remained between perceptions of specific venues and the general public was that of the separate functions of the 'English' and 'Italian' opera. English opera was associated as being a barometer of popularity and intermingled with nationalist sentiment, but the notion of it being a 'low-brow' activity remained substantially unchallenged.[101]

Italian opera continued to be regarded as being absolutely the exclusive domain of fashion and the conveyor of 'high art'. Its rôle was certainly not threatened by the national and aesthetic tone of English opera's exponents. In 1847 Covent Garden burnt down and the theatre raised on the site in 1856 is substantively the theatre in existence today. It has been called the Theatre Royal, The Royal Italian Theatre, Covent Garden and latterly The Royal Opera House.

1848 was not only a year of general revolution in Europe, but it also represented a break with the left-over precepts of the 18th century.[102] It can be said that by this time the spirit of this century was no longer connected with the previous one but had irrevocably been propelled forward, through industrial prowess, revolution and social upheaval into an era with its own identity and had indeed erupted into the strength of its force.

A Noah's ark of Victorian ideology, the Great Exhibition of 1851, comprised many of the elements new and unique to the century and the Western world, displaying them on one site. It reflected at one and the same time the spirit of the new era, and also served to give importance to all those who created the Exhibition, both the individual and the mass, which was personified by the concept of the nation. It finally brought to England's shores a sense of greatness which hitherto had been displayed almost exclusively in the arena of battlegrounds.

Hobsbawm suggests that "science and technology were the muses of the bourgeoisie"[103] citing the construction of the portico of Euston station and describing it as a "triumph" and celebrated by its makers as such. He thus introduces the notion frequently referred to within this thesis that a mark of any society is the construction of monuments and the symbolic significance which they engender. The sentiment expressed as an antecedent to the Crystal Palace and Great Exhibition vividly describes the climate in which a prodigious and prestigious building encapsulating the aspirations of an era was required.

The creation of symbols representing an area of the era are invariably sought for whether by politicians or contemporary critics. Writing in 1842 Laing laments that:

> "In proportion to the wealth of the country, how few in Great Britain are the buildings of any note...; how little is the absorption of capital in museums, pictures, gems, curiosities, palaces, theatres or other unreproductive objects! This which is the main foundation of the greatness of the country, is often stated by foreign travellers, and by some of our own periodical writers, as a proof of our inferiority."[104]

What great strides had been undertaken in only a decade to make Laing's sighing lament irrelevant.

The Great Exhibition can be described as the quintessence of the national art of display', incorporating within it a sense of 'patriotism', transforming that on a greater scale into 'nationalism'. Briggs describes the Crystal Palace of 1851 as "the crowning achievement of the new iron age."[105] All this was achieved through the harnessing of new modes of communication which enabled it to bring new crowds, develop public opinion, and to create a hitherto never imagined environment.

> "The 1851 Preface to G.R. Porter's *Progress of the Nation* caught the new mood. 'It must at all times be a matter of great interest and utility to ascertain the means by which any community has attained to eminence among nations. To inquire into the progress of circumstances which has given pre-eminence to one's own nation would almost seem to be a duty.'"[106]

The rôle of the arts in general at the Great Exhibition, imbued with the spirit of science, technology and discovery, was in many senses an ancillary one. The Exhibition served to laud innovations in industry, and manufacturing and design as such followed in its shadow. The modes of construction denoting achievement and greatness were to be the new gods, and 'art' as such was rendered subservient to this aim. Henry Cole, leading member of the Royal Society of Arts in an address to members demonstrates this sentiment:

> "For the *first* time in the world's history ... the men of Arts, Science, and Commerce were permitted by their respective governments to meet together to discuss and promote those objects for which civilized nations exist."[107]

The Great Exhibition certainly demonstrated to Englishmen and foreigners alike the fact that all kinds of musical entertainment were available and well frequented in London.[108] Opera however, was rarely intermingled with other musical activities during the period of the Great Exhibition as it did not share

an audience, a reason for being, or a 'musical' popularity. It played to its traditional audience and in fact did rather well due to the number of foreigners in the city. Such visitors were always a factor in creating large opera audiences. As has been noted, at the beginning of the 18th century Addison specifically cited opera as a barometer with which the foreigner would judge English society, as did Dr Johnson later in the century, thus associating opera as an entertainment which attracts those from abroad. This held equally true in France at the end of the 18th century, when it formed the core of a substantive and persuasive argument used by Le Roux as a justification for the continued maintenance of opera during the Commune. Ten years after the Great Exhibition, it can be seen that this continues to hold true. Mapleson, director of the Italian Opera at the Haymarket in 1852 comments on the direct result which it produced for his business:

> "I had got together a magnificent company, and as the public found that the performances given merited their support and confidence, the receipts gradually began to justify all expectations, and within a short time I found myself with a very handsome balance at my bankers. This may be accounted for by the very large influx of strangers who came to London to visit the Exhibition of 1862.[109]

t should be noted here that Mapleson directly equates his success not only o the influx of foreigners but also to his "magnificent company". There was no great proletarian influx of foreigners to London. His clients came from raditional audiences and so his opera offered them its appropriate symbols.

In many ways opera was sequestrated from the new sentiments of the age for it was maintained as an exclusive domain for a patrician class, and deliberately was not adapted to attract the greater public.

One of the most notable aspects of Victorian society by the mid-century was that religious sentiment had become intermingled with the new doctrines of the times and had taken on moral and ethical dimensions, which influenced activities in so many domains.

Fiscal success was deemed to be a social and moral virtue. Captains of industry epitomised the image of the new patriarchs and yet the outward manifestations of success steeped as they were in religious and moral connotations, had not changed significantly with the times. These new successful leaders symbolised the achievements of Victorian society and were emulated throughout it. Although they represented only the pinnacle of the

economic triangle their moral tone was imitated down to the codes which the family breadwinner imposed on the structure and nature of the family. A consequence of this was to promote constructs endorsing justifications for meretricious financial dealings through the creation of a national religious language. The platform which served as meeting house for this revival was the state church. Principles virtually unseen since the Commonwealth were revived and became emblems of an age represented by an ever increasing new middle class which had few antecedents in the hereditary aristocracy of yore.[110]

They used sanctimonious sentiments to support the quasi religious morality which served as a provision of justification for their new found wealth. Papism represented a foreign and unsettled world where the precepts of financial achievement were constantly attacked by revolution and penury. Thus the sanctimonious foundation of Victorian well-being was defended at all costs.[111] Opera and what it represented was thus denigrated as it could only disturb their newly found social ethic as they could not legitimately enter the old order'.

The irony inherent in this perspective is that whilst the middle-class exponents of the era were indeed adverse to the concept of opera, those who had surmounted the barriers represented by great economic achievement and political power, joined the aristocracy as supporters of 'Italian opera' and upholders of its traditions.

The opera can be seen to be a classic example or symbol of the Victorian era. Through its very architectural form, the ceremonies held within and the vestments worn by its audience, it exuded prosperity. The opera was frequented by, and associated with, those holding the reins to national security. As an institution it was seen to represent a continuum of purpose and was increasingly to become overtly associated with the State. It upheld moral code, through the works which it represented, and the tone of the audience served as a platform where these could be displayed to those ringing ideas and expertise from foreign climes.

The opera served as a venue at which the intelligentsia, dissidents and aristocracy could intermingle and for the British forces of order to remain satisfied with itself and its ability to attract others for social and political

easons in order for them to incorporate these constructs within the national ıeritage. Thus the combination of the Great Exhibition demonstrating the ıchievements of the new era, combined with the evidence of upheaval caused ›y revolutions on the continent and a xenophobic desire to maintain cultural ıscendance, demonstrated to the nation and other states the political tone vithin England. Together they united to promote an awareness of the need ɔ maintain a national collection of cultural icons.

The history of opera in England since the 1850s and the establishment ›f Covent Garden as the first opera house can be interpreted as bringing the ymbolic meaning of opera into line with a specific venue. This was important ıs it would be seen to represent the institutionalisation of opera in England ıligned with the state and create a nexus which had historically been lacking. 'he alignment of these forces enabled the crucial transformation from a eneral perception of opera as being an exclusive art devoted to the province f particular and anachronistic interest groups, to being part of the recognised ıbric of the state and functioning as a significant symbol of it. Indeed the ‹oyal Italian Opera, Covent Garden was quickly to become distinctly identified s a singular state institution. Other companies performing Italian opera were ot perceived as denoting the same meaning or fulfilling the same function by ıe English public in general. Mapleson, indomitable manager of Italian Opera t the Haymarket and rival of Gye, the Manager of the Royal Italian Opera ɛcounts an amusing anecdote which clearly serves to demonstrate this point:

> "(Mdlle. Albani) told the cabman to take her to the manager's office at the Italian Opera. She was conveyed to the Royal Italian Opera, and, sending in her card to Mr. Gye, who had doubtless heard of her, was at once received. ...
> He explained to her that there was a manager named Mapleson who rented an establishment somewhere round the corner where operas and other things were from time to time played; but *the* opera, the permanent institution known as such, was the one he had the honour of directing.[112]

On the strength of this most important information, Albani broke her ɔntract with Mapleson and remained in London to sing at the Royal Italian pera.

Since gaining Covent Garden in 1847 the opera's relationship with onarchy in particular had been more visible. This was partly due to the fact at Queen Victoria did not have the political difficulties which some of her 3th century predecessors had in establishing the acceptance of the

ıonarchy. She could ostensibly integrate crown and legitimacy and thus efine through the varied ceremonial mechanisms of her power base, such as ɜaraphernalia so important to the transmission of greatness and thus power, ıe tone of her era. Her reign epitomised stability and the importance of ıercantile assets and the Victorians cherished the symbols which emulated . The opera continued to serve as a venue in which the forces of influence ıithin society could be displayed to the greater world through the structure of ıe audience, its dress, behaviour, taste and the public occasions which took lace within the house took advantage of all these factors. When, in the late 880s, Covent Garden suffered some decline after the departure of Gye, ıugustus Harris took over the venue. Harris states his position most loquently when describing his intended plan to take over Covent Garden to lerman Klein, author of *The Golden Age of Opera* and contemporary hronicler of English opera in all its facets in the late 19th century:

> "'I shall recoup myself', he said 'with the aid of society. I shall work this time upon a totally different plan. Instead of burdening myself with the whole responsibility, I shall have the support of the leaders of fashion, and be guaranteed a big subscription before I start'. This sounded both wise and promising; but I asked, 'Do you expect the leaders of fashion and their following to come to Drury Lane?' 'Certainly not' was Harris's reply. 'I have every intention, all being well of taking Covent Garden at the earliest practicable date, and directing the regular season of the 'Royal Italian Opera' there next summer'".[113]

Despite the abundance of new venues, the association with the Italian nguage became even more firmly entrenched during the mid-19th century.

It is important at this juncture to trace the evolution of 'English Opera' ɹring the century in order to better understand the evolution of the movement our century and furthermore to identify its distinguishable characteristics ɔm those of 'Italian Opera' which during the latter part of this century has in ct succeeded, contrary to populist rhetoric, in gaining unprecedented ɔpularity.

Throughout the century there had been numerous attempts to introduce nglish opera' as an equally acceptable form as that of 'Italian opera'. In ɜ49 a committee was set up and a prospectus published in which an ɔplanation of the need for such an institution was furnished. The following ticle by Richard Northcott bears traits similar to that of Louis XIV's first *ivilège*, as well as Le Roux's justification for the continuation of opera under

ıe French Revolution and elaborates the arguments first mooted by Addison nd Steele as well as using the new social arguments peculiar to the ıdustrialised age of education and the masses.

> "The present depressed condition of the national lyric drama in this country is a matter of deep regret to every patriotic lover of the art. ... there should be no theatre exclusively appropriated to the performance of opera in our own language. The taste and fondness for the lyric drama are more strongly evinced every year, but it is reserved for London, with its enormous population, to be the only European capital which is without a lyric establishment, fostered and sustained by the nation. In other countries the national opera houses are supported by large annual grants of money, as well as by the liberal private subscriptions, but individual speculation has been hitherto the sole and precarious chance of support for an English Opera House. ...
> There is likewise every reason to expect that a great dramatic school of instruction will arise from the existence of an English Opera House. The musical masses must derive benefit from hearing lyric works in their own language, and its tendency will also be to create and form good singers. ...
> The great national establishments in France, Italy, or Germany are never closed on the plea of a scarcity of leading vocalists, ...
> ... it is confidently believed that a National Opera may be called into existence worthy of ranking with the great continental theatres. ... the time has arrived when an earnest and energetic appeal may be made for public support of an undertaking having for its object the formation, on a permanent basis, of a Royal English Opera House."[114]

his great demonstration of faith, however, did not come to fruition. What has ımained nonetheless are the basic notions which have been employed to ructure the arguments furnished in support of the concept of 'English opera' ıd remain extant in the present day.

The *Illustrated London News* critic in 1862 demonstrated that the major emes concerning English opera highlighted by Addison, Steele and Hazlitt ere far from forgotten. Indeed, its seems that in the 19th century these emes had become more ingrained and accepted in England as critics mented upon their countrymen's incapacity to emulate the great national ›eras of Europe and the connotations which these rendered:

> "Now and then a feeble attempt to set going an English Opera made by some person without experience or means, struggled a little while and was abandoned. How times are altered we need not describe, English opera has now the occupation, not exclusive indeed, but regular and permanent – of the largest and noblest theatre in London, with all its rich appurtenances; she has a musical director of the highest eminence, with an orchestral and choral establishment, not surpassed in any theatre in Europe; she gives our most distinguished composers an amount of employment which she was never able to give them before and stimulates their exertions by holding out the rewards due to genius.
> ... Much has been done, but much still remains to do, for it can never be said that the musical drama holds its due place among the entertainments of the English metropolis, till it is established in a dwelling of its own, and till the phrase 'the opera' shall be applied, as in Paris, to the national Opera, and not, as at present

in London, to an entertainment which, however splendid and beautiful is only an exotic."[115]

ıis article stresses the importance placed on the rôle of the opera. It is teresting that opera is described in such terms as "noblest theatre" or that e musical director is of "highest eminence; not surpassed in any theatre in ɹrope". The debate which has hitherto contented itself with social and ıguistic difficulties has now broadened to that of the rôle of opera and the ate. This article is very much an antecedent to the debate to be lead by the ;ponents of the 'Opera in English debate', E.J. Dent, Professor of Drama at ambridge University (1926-1941) and Tyrone Guthrie, celebrated director at adler's Wells Theatre, during and after the Second World War.

The arguments supporting state subsidisation of national opera ɔntributed to the popularity of this concept. The mid-century is viewed by ɐnt, for example, as the moment when the modern notion of subsidisation of ŋglish opera out of nationalistic sentiment was first mooted. However, as ırly as 1828, John Ebers, Manager of the King's Theatre, detailed in his ɐmoirs some ideas which clearly are antecedents to this, linking the state's sponsibility to opera's continuation:

"As a security against the fluctuation in receipts, ... the Continental plan should be adopted, by the King's Theatre being taken under the immediate protection of the Government, and aided by its support and guarantee."[116]

ɜ went on later to suggest that, another method of sustaining opera might be:

"an incorporated body of proprietors, having their powers and responsibilities regulated by Act of Parliament. This plan would probably be found to remove the chief difficulties attached to others which have been tried or proposed, as tending to effect the permanency and security of the management, the main object in view. Or, if the obtaining of the act should be found impracticable, a guarantee fund might be raised on a principle similar to that on which the musical festivals, given in the country are secured."[117]

ıat is of particular interest in terms of this thesis is the connection which this mpany eagerly sought with the state through its choice of title. If the opera ɹre to have been subsidised, surely it would be simplistic to speculate that would have occurred essentially due to a recognition of English opera's ɔposed musical popularity or its intrinsic merit to the state. In reality its ɜociation with the royal insignia was in fact the basis of its purported claim. s evident that the support of English opera at Covent Garden depended

ıpon the support of royal patronage which alone could bestow upon the art a neaning greater than that which was generally understood.

Patronage was not always of a financial nature as William Charles Macready observes:

> "London, September 24 (1831). Robertson told me that Sir H. Wheatley had, on the part of the Queen, expressed a wish that the price of her box should be reduced from £400 to £350. If this be Royal Patronage commend me to popular favour! Patronage to a declining art!"[118]

Theatre managers could not afford such a policy and sought to develop ›rojects where the opera could profit from its association with the crown and ›arliament. Mapleson went so far as to gain the active support of the Prince ›f Wales for the creation of a project which literally was to be physically, and hus inextricably and incontestably, linked to Parliament, and thus would be vell placed to gain its overt support through pecuniary subsidy.

This project is an excellent illustration of the prevailing relationship ›etween opera, society and the state in the 1870s and as such its aims merit lose investigation. In his conception of this project, Mapleson eloquently nited the competing forces behind the dilemma inherent in the meaning of pera. He succinctly associated the spirit of an age with an acknowledgment ›r a continuum of its national meaning and its socio/political rôle:

> "In designing this, I intended it to be the leading Opera-house in the world; every provision had been made. The building was entirely isolated; and a station had been built beneath the house in connection with the District Railway, so that the audience on leaving had merely to descend the stairs and enter the train. In the sub-basement dressing rooms, containing lockers, were provided for suburban visitors who might wish to attend the opera. A subterranean passage, moreover, led into the Houses of Parliament; and I had made arrangements by which silent members, after listening to beautiful music instead of dull debates, might return to the House on hearing the division-bell. The Parliamentary support thus secured would alone have given an ample source of revenue."[119]

ı particular Mapleson acknowledged the structural changes of urban life. He ›commodated the need for facilities for use by the new suburban mass, but ill clearly expected them to possess and use vestments which would stinguish this activity from the outside world, by making provision for a place disrobe before entering the house in the correct attire. Furthermore his ›heme to connect the Houses of Parliament with the national opera is a rceful demonstration of the importance of the relationship which he equates ›tween the two. Members of parliament are seen as those who, sensitive to

aesthetic arguments and surrounded by cultural philistinism, would uphold the notion of opera and could thus be looked upon to support it. This notion encapsulates some of the earliest steps towards active government subvention and the methods employed in political lobbies with respect to opera. The concept, already nascent in the placement of very first stone of this house, was that a government needed to maintain close and overt ties with the national opera house. In the context of the environment of the late 19th century, dictated by capitalist sentiment, it would then be incumbent upon government to pay for the maintenance of opera in order for it to perform the ceremonial services which the state, would in turn, require of it.

Mapleson pronounced his aims in 1875 for the new 'National Opera House' at the ceremony to mark the placement of its foundation stone. One can make no mistake about his order of priorities. He stressed unequivocally that the National Opera House would be "devoted firstly" to "Italian opera". Mapleson cleverly accommodated the cries for 'English opera' and expressions of nationalist sentiment but made certain to place them clearly in second position. Furthermore, as a final concession, and having first acknowledged the challenge represented by the influx in the 1850s of highly proficient European musicians educated in the conservatories of their countries, Mapleson paid lip-service to the inspirations and fashionable new trends concerning national musical education. To appease popular nationalist sentiments he suggested that the National Opera House should serve as a training ground for British musicians.

Mapleson's manifesto, by the very nature of its form, is steeped in nationalist rhetoric. Its language uses conventions similar to those which have been examined previously, which declaim nationalist sentiment and cultural hegemony. One example of this principle was clearly established in 1669 in Louis XIV's *privilège* which demonstrated that the establishment and maintenance of French opera (i.e. national opera) was important to support the cultural might of the state. Mapleson's aims, written over 200 years later in an entirely different political environment and country, stress that national opera is important in order to ensure that England could at least keep up with, if not surpass, foreign competitors.

The similarity between these two documents is evident and lends much support, as examples separated by time, politics and country, to the significance of the argument that opera's symbolic structure has on national thought and rhetoric. Furthermore they make it clear that its importance has remained consistent across these quite different and not easily juxtaposed times and social and political eras.

Finally, the ceremony to mark the placement of its foundation stone was designed to mark the creation of a "Grand" and "National" Opera House, a title which vividly encapsulates the preoccupations of the time, for opera was not deemed to be opera if it were not invested with 'grand' and 'national' connotations. Implications of patriotic support formed part of the material, albeit symbolic, contained in its foundation stone and the monarchy was thus required to place a symbolic blessing on this unison of spirits:

> "The National Opera-House is to be devoted firstly to the representation of Italian Opera, which will be confined as heretofore to the spring and summer months; and, secondly, to the production of the works of English composers, represented by English performers, both vocal and instrumental.
> It is intended, as far as possible to connect the Grand National Opera-house with the Royal Academy of Music, the National Training School for Music and other kindred institutions in the United Kingdom, by affording to duly qualified students a field for the exercise of their profession in all its branches.
> ...
> In Paris, when sufficiently advanced, the students can make a short step from the Conservatoire to the Grand Opera; so it is hoped that English students will use the legitimate means now offered and afforded for the first time in this country of perfecting their general training, whether as singers, instrumentalists, or composers, according to their just claims.
> In conclusion I beg leave to invite your Royal Highness to proceed with the ceremony of laying the first stone of the new Grand National Opera-House."[120]

The late 19th century is often described by the phrase coined by Klein as The Golden Age of Opera in England. Galas were held at the house for auspicious occasions such as the welcoming of Heads of State and foreign dignitaries or even musicians, who in this century had gained the stature of cultural ambassadors or living icons. Because 'society' was assured a social rôle and those who attended were more likely to be accepted by it, subscriptions grew. Incidentally, Covent Garden was also to become home to some of the greatest singers in Europe. When it finally became assured of its own position, the need to maintain the word 'Italian' in the title of the house became obsolete.[121] The significance of this change in title is witnessed by the fact that there was no longer a need for linguistic re-enforcement and

justification of Covent Garden's international predominance. Consequently the support of a qualifying adjective to opera was rendered redundant. The term opera alone was understood as a place where 'society' congregated to indulge in high privileged culture. Thus it is not surprising that opera took its place standing alongside 'Royal' without need for qualification. This implied as well that state endorsement through the adjective 'Italian' (which for so long had been intimately connected with the legitimacy of the institution) was no longer essential.

It is true equally of England and France that the separation of the notions and social significance of 'high' and 'low' culture became the arbiter of what was, and what was not, accepted as opera during the latter half of the 19th century to an even greater degree than in previous eras. In London, this was particularly evident given the intermingled debates concerning notions of nationality, language, grand and common, juxtaposed against the Victorian ideology and rhetoric of the new industrial era. The problem was how, in effect, to define what was, and what was not, opera, but something rather similar to it in strictly musical or theatrical but not social terms. The proliferation of works performed in English, the abundance of theatres housing performances of these, and the growing audience which attended them was evidence in itself that something did very much exist and far from going away, was occupying a considerable place on the cultural map.

Thus the argument could no longer plausibly be sustained that 'English opera' did not exist within the fabric of operatic performance and convention and yet this argument is precisely what had been maintained by many commentators and historians who accepted the notions which English cultural language had hitherto been schooled in. The question concerning why this point of view has been so preciously nurtured and upheld is fundamental in striving towards an analysis of the history of opera in England. There would appear to be a perverse relationship between the desire for national opera and a deprecating sentiment that if the product were English then it could not have serious merit, musically, nor could it qualify for representation on the national platform as 'English opera' breached national etiquette and the notion of opera and the significance of 'high art'. This plain refusal on the part of eminent critics and those with social and political influence to address these issues is

one of the essential factors leading to the schism between language and interpretation which came very much to light during the 20th century when there were many attempts to create an opera company and redefine the meaning of the term. To an extent this issue remains un-addressed as 'high culture' is understood inherently although not often stated except in a pejorative fashion or as a codified language as a distinct relationship to the context of opera. The term 'low culture' has been left by analysts of opera to fend for itself and has not been identified as having a relevance to the genre.

Shaw in his rôle as music critic writing under the *nom-de-plume* 'Corno di Bassetto' in *The Musical Times* of 1888-1889 places 'opera in English' very much as an issue which concerned class distinctions and the delineation of high' and 'low' art. Although Shaw does not state overtly that opera should be sung in foreign languages, he chose to highlight a less than flattering example of a 'popular' and touring company and to infer that it was representative of English opera, thus leaving the reader to supply the antithetical mental image of real opera:

> "The importance of this question of English as she is sung is emphasized just now by the advertisement which announces Mr. Leslie's very laudable and far-sighted plan of making the new Lyric Theatre an English opera house. English opera suggests at once the Carl Rosa style of entertainment. Now, with all due honour to Mr. Carl Rosa's enterprise and perseverance, the performances of his company have never, even at their best, achieved a satisfactory degree of distinction and refinement. But what is peculiar to its representation is the slovenliness in uttering the national language. In an institution which ought to be a school of pure English this is disgraceful, the more so as the defect is, of course, not really the result of social and educational disadvantages, but only of indifference caused by colloquial habit, and by want of artistic sensibility and vigilance."[122]

Furthermore Shaw described the opera as an "institution" of state portent. He made the point that requisites for opera are "distinction and refinement", thus lending weight to the nature of exclusivity of opera in England. He reinforced the view that for opera to be of musical or social and thus national value, it needed to be foreign and denote refinement. Both Blom and Raynor note that by the year 1880 there was a proliferation of English composers who were either already recognised for their talents or would, by the turn of the century, make a considerable impact on the musical world.[123] Sullivan was 38 years of age and almost a generation apart from those who were to follow: Edward Elgar, Ethyl Smyth, Frederick Delius, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav

Holst, whilst Benjamin Britten was to represent the following generation. Musical talent thus was not lacking but Grand National English Opera was far from being a possible outlet for the demonstration of musical capacity. Devoid of the other elements so essential to the meaning of opera such a project simply could not be maintained. This demonstrates once again that an opera is perhaps the weakest element in the definition of the term. Opera can exist to some extent without the structure, but almost always the work itself, is the most tangential factor contributing to the meaning of the word. One is more likely to remember the shell of a building deemed to be an opera house than the transitory work which was produced inside it. So too the rôle of its audience, its behaviour, the elements which make up its outer core and ceremony involved with the event, contribute more significantly to the quality of the event itself, which is almost always mitigated against, through not only the arrows of subjective criticism but also the greater and weightier meanings of the opera and opera.

This did not exclude forays or experimentation in other forms of opera. It was simply that they were not viewed as being part of the social and political representation of the state.

3.2.2 France

On 10th October, 1800 a plot to assassinate Napoleon was uncovered and the two would-be assailants were arrested at the theatre. On Christmas Eve of the same year Napoleon was the subject of an actual assassination attempt whilst on his way to the opera. He narrowly escaped harm from the bomb which hit his carriage and resulted in a large loss of life and property. The First Consul not only arrived unscathed and apparently unconcerned at the opera house, where rumours of his assassination were already rife, but in the fashion of a true statesman displayed himself to the audience from his box receiving resounding applause from the audience.[124] The performance that evening was at once suspended in deference to the political event and the house bore witness to Napoleon's triumphant escape. This event was itself operatic in character combining spectacle and intrigue against a brilliant backdrop, a most vividly illustrative example of the connection between the opera in France and the state at the outset of the 19th century.

Napoleon's motivations for support of opera were far from 'artistically' inspired. His much vaunted phrase "Paris vaut bien un opéra" reveals the cardinal rule operating at least since the 17th century that a capital city requires a great opera.[125] The consummate collector of the spoils of military conquest was to make the opera in his capital a jewelled casket of display, for acquisition and display of the arts and arts institutions and was yet another way in which Napoleon demonstrated the might of his regime. It was to opera that Napoleon invited his generals and officers of high rank, and he determined a high level of pomp and state ceremony within the house.[126] Between the years 1806 and 1811 Napoleon decreed the closure of virtually all public theatres and implemented a formalised administrative system of the remaining national theatres.[127] Those which were permitted to keep their doors open were ordered to give 20 per cent of their profit directly to the *Académie Impériale de l'Opéra*. Thus Crosten, one of the foremost historians of opera during this era, could comfortably assert that "The official lyric theater was now reinstalled more securely than ever in its former seat of privilege...."[128] This security, he claims, was determined by the ever increasing levels of subvention accorded to the opera at the beginning of the century. This trend, he argues, lasted for three decades. The opera was to be an important and highly visible state institution throughout this period.

In 1803, Bonet de Treiches, director of the *Académie Impériale* wrote an article entitled *De l'opéra en l'An XII*, in which he stated that the Paris opéra was not only superior to <u>all</u> the other opera houses, but that it represented the glory of the empire" as a "permanent party which the Emperor gave to Europe". "Supérieure à tous les autres opéras, elle intéresse la gloire de l'Empire: c'est une fête permanente que l'Empereur donne à l'Europe."[129] Furthermore he stated unequivocally that the opera is important and should be supported by the state because it is one of the places of contact between the head of the nation and the nation itself: "c'est un des lieux de contact du Chef de la Nation avec la Nation elle-même".[130] This, in the days before the infrastructures of transport and mass communication were firmly in place, was a considerable claim.

De Treiches' reasoning for the continuation of state support of opera differed little from that of the intendant Le Roux during the Paris Commune

ɔnly a decade earlier, or those inscribed in Louis XIV's *privilèges* a century ɔrior to that. Opera was, in terms which have now become familiar, a national nstitution of great importance to the French State, whatever the political ɔersuasion of those in power. Opera, it was claimed, brought wealth to the ɔapital as foreigners and provincials were attracted to the city partly because ɔf it, and once there stayed and increased its economic and cultural wealth:

> "Quel nombre incalculable de spectateurs la province et l'étranger n'envoient-ils pas à l'Opéra, et par conséquent à Paris, où ils se fixent pour de longs séjours!"[131]

Thus opera was seen to be a significant economic escalator. This fully ustified continued state subvention of opera he argued as the returns from it ar exceeded expenditure. This is a particularly interesting justification for a ɔotoriously loss-making enterprise. He endorses subvention on the grounds hat even if opera were to continue losing money, the commercial benefits from he circulation of income derived as spin-offs from opera warrant a policy of ɔontinued subvention:

> "Sur le plan économique, on peut considérer que le secours annuel de 600 000 F accordé à l'Opéra rapporte à la Capitale une 'circulation' de capitaux de plus de 20 millions par an. Combien de corps de métiers, combien de commerces ne sont-ils pas redevables de leur existence aux productions lyriques!"[132]

Furthermore, de Treiches concludes, that these factors signify that opera ɔhould remain within the direct ambit of government as entrepreneurs could ɜopardise its immeasurable value by looking after their personal interests ather than "la gloire du pays".[133] He asserted with equal vigour that "la ɔerte de l'opéra porterait un coup mortel à l'art"[134] but his justifications for ɹupporting art and staving off its "mortal blow" appear transparently mercantile ɪnd political.

A quarter of a century later, Dr. Véron, the first entrepreneur to make a ɹrofit from the opera (although it still received considerable state subsidy, even ɔough the terms of his contract stated that he was to run the opera at his own risques, périls et fortune"[135]) supported de Treiches' analysis of the ituation. Moreover, he concluded with the extraordinarily frank and apparently nshocking statement that although opera did not interest Napoleon I he ndorsed it thoroughly as the premier state art.

> "L'empereur Napoléon 1er assistait rarement aux représentations de l'Opéra. Il avait peu de goût pour la musique française; mais il attachait une sérieuse

importance à la question des théâtres pour la ville de Paris; il regardait surtout comme nécessaires au progrès des arts et à la gloire nationale l'existence et la splendeur de l'Académie impériale de musique. L'Empereur n'aimait pas l'Opéra; mais il le subventionnait largement."[136]

Not only did the Emperor support the institution but he determined that even at its most basic level of 'an opera' there would be no competition.

"L'Empereur ne voulait pas permettre qu'il se fît une concurrence musicale aux représentations de l'Opéra."[137]

The demise of Napoleon did not lead to the demise of opera in France. Véron concludes, as Crosten later would, that opera was maintained in a very similar manner by the very different political regimes which held power in France at the beginning of the century. He said:

"Le décret du 13 août 1811 fut maintenu en vigueur pendant toute la durée de la Restauration. Les dépenses de l'Opéra, sous Louis XVIII et sous Charles X, étaient donc ainsi payées..."[138]

Whatever the inherent differences between the empire and the monarchy, opera continued to be supported by them. The one element which changed was its title. The tradition of naming the Opéra after the ascendant regime was maintained. As power moved from Napoleon to Louis XVIII and back, the Opéra's official title was duly changed from *Académie Impériale de Musique* to *Académie de Musique* reverting once again to *Académie Impériale de Musique* with the brief return of Napoleon and then once more taking on the title which it held for most of the *ancien régime* that of the *Académie Royale de Musique* which once more was controlled under the aegis of the King's household.[139] The stability of the *ancien régime* was well and truly thrown over during the revolution. The 19th century witnessed many tussles for political ascendance and this contributed to the volatile changes in management and name of the Opéra.

Attendance at the Opéra became once again a formal part of French social structure. The opening up of the city to the newly wealthy classes and the creation of such public areas as the Palais Royal, placed opera at the centre of the new dilettantism or dandyism of the era. Opera became once more the place to see and be seen, a haven for the patrician class. This popularity was abruptly ended on 13 February 1820 when the Duc de Berry was assassinated at the Opéra. He was next in line to the Crown of the ailing Louis XVIII (1815-1824) and at the time thought to be the end of the Bourbon

ine.[140] France was in mourning and the opera house was razed by official decree of 9th August 1820.

Official title for the Opéra since its creation	
28 June 1669	Académie d'opéra
13 March 1672	Académie royale de musique
24 June 1791	Opéra (Castil-Blaze dates it as 21 June)
29 June 1791	Académie de musique
17 September 1791	Académie royale de musique
1 October 1791	Opéra national
15 August 1792	Académie de musique
12 August 1793	Opéra
27 Vendémiaire Year II (18 October 1793)	Opéra national
20 Thermidor Year II (7 August 1797)	Théâtre des Arts
14 Pluviôse Year II (2 February 1797)	Théâtre de la République des Arts
6 Fructidor Year X (24 August 1802)	Théâtre de l'Opéra
29 June 1804	Académie impériale de musique
3 April 1814	Académie de musique
5 April 1815	Académie impériale de musique
9 July 1815	Académie royale de musique
4 August 1830	Théâtre de l'Opéra
10 August 1830	Académie royale de musique
26 February 1848	Théâtre de la Nation
29 March 1848	Opéra. Théâtre de la Nation
2 September 1850	Académie nationale de musique
2 December 1852	Académie nationale de musique
1 July 1854	Théâtre impérial de l'Opéra (Closed 2 September 1870)
12 July 1871	Théâtre national de l'Opéra
14 January 1939	Réunion des Théâtres lyriques nationaux
8 February 1978	Le Théâtre national de l'Opéra de Paris
2 April 1990	Opéra de Paris

It was in the new 'temporary'[141] opera houses of 'la salle Favart' 820-1821 and 'le théâtre Louvois' 1821 and finally 'la salle Le Peletier' 821-1873 that the Golden Age of French Opera was to begin. Ironically or erhaps consistent with its history it was foreign and essentially Italian omposers who formed the backbone of the Golden Age of French Opera.

Meyerbeer, Auber and Donlevy were followed by Rossini and then Donizetti, Bellini and later Verdi who were all acclaimed in the French capital. Once again Paris, this time because of its position as a prosperous city and cultural Mecca, managed to hold in its capital and within the walls of its opera, the greatest composers of the era. This golden age coincided with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the changing nature of the opera house reflected its values.

Charles X (1824-1830) also understood that opera was a convenient and suitable vehicle for state and self promotion. Rossini was commissioned to write *Le Voyage à Rheims*, a work which detailed the Coronation of the Monarch on 1824 and was steeped in symbolism designed to lend support to the new monarch's legitimacy. In this sense the opera was no more than a state commanded work of propaganda.

The revolution of 1830 and the abdication of Charles X did not deter the endorsement of the opera by the bourgeois king Louis-Philippe (1830-1848) as early as 1831 when he and his family behaved as previous monarchs had traditionally done and displayed themselves at the opera house, thus demonstrating their legitimacy to the public.

The change in government brought about by the revolution was also reflected in the organisation of the opera. It was hoped that direct subsidy could be diminished, perhaps even abolished and that the new director of the Opéra would serve the state's requirements while also harbouring some of the risks. In order to do this the opera house like so many other state institutions needed to change its image and become home to the bourgeoisie of this era.

The state no longer wished to be seen to shoulder entire financial responsibility for the opera and thus sought the services and income of an independent manager and financier. Dr. Véron, the successful contender for the position of director of the institution explains the way in which he argued his case and won the coveted position of '*directeur-entrepreneur*'.

> "Il me fut permis de lui exposer en peu de mots l'importance politique qui pouvait avoir, au commencement d'un règne, une direction brillante et bien entendue de l'Opéra. Il faut ... que l'étranger soit attiré à Paris par la bonne exécution des chefs-d'oeuvre de musique, et qu'il trouve les loges remplies par une société elegante et rassurée. Il faut que le succès et les recettes de l'Opéra soient un démenti donné aux émeutes."[142]

He not only calls upon the same sentiments as those spelled out in Louis XIV's initial *privilège* while pleading his case to be taken on as director of the Opéra

ɔut also makes no secret of the fact that opera is a reflection of the legitimacy ɔf government. Thus the state, in bestowing on him the honour of the new ɔosition, made the nature of Véron's obligation to it very clear. Furthermore :he terms of his contract were most specific with respect to his obligations to :he state:

> "Article 4. L'entrepreneur sera tenu de maintenir l'Opéra dans l'état de pompe et de luxe convenable à ce théâtre national."[143]

The state's interests and that of Dr. Véron, were fortunately for opera, nutually beneficial. He exploited the new found wealth of the industrialists and nvested the opera with references which displayed the mercantile success of his era. Véron even changed the spatial configurations of the house to reflect he new power structure by reducing the number of boxes to increase seating ɜnd thus reduce prices as he reasoned that this would:

> "...mieux convenir à la fortune et aux habitudes d'économie des nouveaux grands seigneurs du tiers-état, de la nouvelle cour bourgeoise qui allait remplacer celle de Charles X."[144]

From opera house to art, opera represented all that was most grand, nagnificent and ceremonial. Thus he cleverly transformed it into one of the ɔremost representative symbols of the July Monarchy. Véron expressly set ɔut to demonstrate that the meaning of the opera in the 1830s was ɜynonymous with that which Louis XIV had invested it with at Versailles.

> "J'avais d'abord refusé de me charger, au lendemain d'une révolution d'un aussi lourd fardeau que celui de l'Opéra, alors abandonné du public, malgré le bel ensemble de talents qui s'y trouvaient depuis peu de temps réunis. J'avais hésité près de 15 jours; mais après reflexion, je m'étais dit: 'La révolution de Juillet est le triomphe de la bourgeoisie: cette bourgeoisie victorieuse tiendra à troner, à s'amuser; l'Opéra deviendra son Versailles, elle y accourra en foule prendre la place des grands seigneurs et de la cour exilés'."[145]

ɜgain, he also uses arguments similar to those of Le Roux and de Treiches y supporting the fallacy of its supposed economic viability as well as cknowledging its position within the fabric of the state and society:

> "Toutes les grandes capitales de l'Europe ont un opéra qui ne vit guère que des chefs-d'oeuvre applaudis à Paris. L'Académie impériale de musique est donc à l'intérieur un puissant encouragement pour plus d'une industrie, comme elle est une des gloires de la France à l'étranger."[146]

éron's interests were undoubtedly motivated by personal incentive, as the ırther the state diminished its subsidy, the less profit he acquired. Yet he ɜclares somewhat audaciously what few have openly affirmed about opera's

elationship to the state which is that its funding is not simply a matter of the ;tate arts funding levels which restrict the other arts. Opera's meaning and mportance to the state are greater than the work performed or even the venue)r event itself. Therefore he concludes, it will always be supported financially)y the state whatever restrictions are announced in official arts funding and hat it is in the state's interest to do so. Opera which does not display splendour" cannot compete with the great capitals and therefore loses its nost essential meaning. It is thus an expenditure which the state cannot ationalise.

> "Réduire la subvention de l'Opéra, ce n'est donc pas faire une sage économie; c'est d'abord compromettre le splendeur de l'institution, c'est restreindre les ressources si nécessaires pour lutter contre la concurrence de l'Allemagne, de l'Angleterre et de la Russie; et malgré tout cela, c'est encore rendre indispensable au bout d'un certain temps, la concession de crédits extraordinaires. Puis, enfin, quand les déficits se sont transmis comme héritages de direction à direction, la liquidition suprême donne nécessairement un passif considerable que le gouvernement et le budget de l'Etat finissent toujours à payer."[147]

;rosten concurs with Véron's views. He believed that the state continued to upport the opera because it could not let such an important institution be left) the capricious variations of the market-place.

> "Since the day of its founding the Académie had been the official seat of musical culture in France, and the government still felt that the fate of the arts was so closely bound to the institution that it could not be left to ride entirely unsupported on the fluctuations of private trade."[148]

'éron's direction of the opera lasted a brief six years and it was the only eriod that the opera did not run at a loss and thus a financial burden to those esponsible, which ultimately always meant the state, since the direction of ully at the end of the 17th century. Véron did not extend his stay at the)péra because he realised that this period of prosperity could only be short- ved, dependent as it was upon state subvention, and having gained andsomely from the enterprise he had the foresight to realise that he could)t achieve this for long.

Indeed this grand era of French opera did not survive the revolutionary ovements of the latter part of the decade. Patrick Barbier advances the eory that opera was so allied in the minds of the public with those holding e reins of power that it was closed down by the rioters in reaction to its rôle:

> "De même lors des révolutions de 1830 et 1848, les emeutiers se portèrent inévitablement vers l'Opéra, non pas parce qu'il y cachait quelque personnage

important, mais parce qu'il tenait lieu de symbole du pouvoir monarchique et de fief des classes dirigeantes."[149]

ı 1848 the Opéra was closed down but allowed to re-open with a production alled *Les Barricades de 1848*.[150] This is a good example of the way in hich once a group gained power, the Opéra was quickly a venue in which its ropaganda was displayed.

The 19th century witnessed many violent scenes occurring in and around ıe opera house which became increasingly associated with privilege and eremony. On 14 January 1858 whilst travelling to the Opera, Napoleon III's arriage was bombed by Orsini killing and injuring 150 people. Orsini acted ı the belief that by assassinating Napoleon III the way would be freed for the mancipation of Italy. In 1861, the unpopularity of Napoleon III was clearly ıanifested inside the Opéra itself at the opening of *Tannhauser* in Paris. The mperor had supported Wagner and financed this opera. Thus it was seen by ıose in dissent with the Third Empire as being a politically suspect work for ose at odds with the regime. Furthermore the establishment also had its wn quarrel with the way in which opera (a euphemism for the regime) was eing conducted and the performance of the production was marred as embers of the *Jockey Club* created a disturbance ostensibly because there as no traditional ballet in the third act. This disturbance had, in fact, other ore basic nationalist origins and the elimination of the ballet was perceived ; an invasion of German influence upon French Grand Opera as well as an ıdorsement of the values of a corrupt and rigid and suspiciously ternationalist regime.

It was however Napoleon III who most obviously changed the face of ıera in France. The competitive era of great exhibitions had begun. The ıpact which the great exhibition of 1851 had on London and thus England ıs already been noted. The universal exhibitions of the late 19th century ere to mark the beginning of magnificent temporary structures in Paris oclaiming the might of the ascendant regime. The Second Empire, however, quired symbolic venues of a more permanent nature where the élite could ther and which would inspire others.

In 1860, Napoleon III called for an international competition to find the chitect of this emblem of his regime. The specifications were clear. An

pera house worthy of the city of Paris was to be designed, and spatial onfigurations were to take into account the ranks and numbers of the élite. he house was not to be too large for fear that it might become a less select, nd therefore more public, meeting place. It was, however, certainly to be umptuous to demonstrate the wealth and greatness of the nation. Although harles Garnier's project was chosen in 1861 this mighty symbol of lapoleon III's reign ironically was not inaugurated until 1875 when France nce again had become a republic.[151] The symbol of the empire became the ymbol of the new republic which emulated the pomp of the regime it had eplaced. Indeed this opera house was to demonstrate the might of the state, ıe ultimate institution. It was to be distinguished from all other theatres rimarily by its title as the use of the word '*palais*' was infinitely more restigious, linking it to those in power than simply the word 'house'. Gourret ıggests that Garnier's intention was that this new opera would resemble an alian palace, perhaps a metaphoric architectural link with opera's origins in ıe ducal palaces of Italy.

> "...tout cet assortiment luxueux et vibrant, ne faisait-il pas ressembler le nouvel Opéra à un Palais italien?"[152]

Frédérique Patureau describes this new Opéra suggesting that it was a ıysical extension of the philosophy of that era in that it would act as a symbol France well beyond its borders, assert the importance of opera over all her musical forms and offer to the wealthy and fashionable an exceptional eeting house.[153] She goes on to suggest that as the centre of power was eing transferred from inside the court to that of the new industrialised society, ı too, was the position of the Opéra within the structure of the newly -created city a fundamental design of the Empire with its site linking the court ıd the new bourgeois public areas:

> "on décide d'installer l'édifice au centre d'une place majestueuse, créée de toute pièces en rasant des immeubles genants, directement liée aux Tuileries par une immense avenue percée a cet effect qui, en concrétisant le lien entre le théâtre et le Palais Impérial, et en créant spécialement un 'quartier de l'Opéra', place ce dernier au centre de la vie publique. Sur le plan international, c'est l'Opéra qui est naturellement choisi pour symboliser non seulement l'art mais surtout l'esprit et le rayonnement français, ..."[154]

century later the socialist government of François Mitterrand chose the site its new opera house as the Place de la Bastille, linking it with Paris'

·evolutionary past. The Press Release of 17 January 1983 by Mitterrand's Minister of Culture, Jack Lang could easily have been written by a minister of Napoleon III, so closely do the rationales of these two governments concur:

> "Si la commande d'un nouvel opéra est un événement, sa localisation dans un des lieux les plus symboliques de l'histoire de France confère au projet une importance qui doit mobiliser les plus grands talents de l'architecture. C'est pourquoi le Gouvernement lance un appel aux hommes de l'art du monde entier. Qu'ils sachent que son ambition est de faire de cet opéra, place de la Bastille, un évènement majeur de l'architecture contemporaine et de l'urbanisme pour la fin du XXème siècle."[155]

The Palais Garnier has remained to this day however, a very identifiable symbol of the greatness and prestige of a state institution, whether opera is performed there or not. And according to Patureau, even in recent times the symbolic meaning of this opera house is maintained:

> "Prestigieuse institution d'Etat, musée de la musique chargé de transmettre aux générations futures le patrimoine musical national, le Palais Garnier est a tout moment placé au cœur de la vie politique et des grands débats qui l'agitent en une époque de mutation qui consacre l'assise définitive de la République."[156]

Gourret suggests that it still fulfils its original mission as a grand monumental institution:

> "Le Palais Garnier est le théâtre lyrique le plus grandiose de France et, peut-être, le plus beau du monde. Chef d'oeuvre d'architecture, musée des Beaux-Arts et, tout à la fois, première scène nationale, il n'a cessé, depuis son inauguration de susciter l'admiration universelle."[157]

Napoleon III (1852-1870) was in exile when the symbol of his empire was nally opened to the Lord Mayor of London, a number of crowned heads of Europe and other political, artistic and finance personalities. The regimes which followed did however tacitly understand his purpose and in the years ntil 1975 no fewer than 24 galas for royalty and 7 galas for heads of state were held within its walls as well as galas in honour of companies from ifferent countries. However it is important to note here that the opening of the ouse did not involve the presentation of a new opera. A rather banal malgam of the great successes of the 1830s and 1840s was presented to the istinguished guests. This eloquently highlights the significance which those esponsible for the opening attributed to the art as opposed to the experience.

Patureau describes the way in which this 'palace' designed and onstructed for one regime was to so well serve and endorse the legitimacy

of another which in many senses represented antithetical political and social mores.

> "L'inauguration n'arrive-t-elle pas fort à propos pour permettre au nouveau régime de donner un signe ostensible de sa légitimité, sur le plan national et international?"[158]

The institution of the opera continued to represent the interests of the state. Towards the end of the century republicans would argue that its very existence was a blight on the nature of the republic as it represented all the vestiges of the monarchies and empires of old. Octave Mirabeau was one such critic. Writing in 1885 he suggested that state subvention of the opera was in opposition to the precepts of the republican cause:

> "...car s''il est très utile aux mains d'une monarchie', puisque 'le souverain y donne des fêtes, des galas', que 'c'est là qu'il vient présenter à la foule les grands personnages étrangers en visite chez nous', c'est 'une institution de luxe, c'est le luxe seul qui peut le soutenir, le luxe qui s'épanouit au milieu des fastes des cours royales, mais qui s'évanouit sous le fumier des basses-cours républicaines. 'Fermez l'Opéra,' enjoint-il donc au pouvoir, et mettez sur les portes closes et sa loggie déserte un vaste écriteau: Fermé pour cause de la République."[159]

This view, however, never took hold in political circles as it is supported precisely because of opera's rôle as a grand venue and ability to cause others to marvel. This is the very reason for a state, republican or not, to support it. Ernest Boysse writing in 1881 details the significance of the Palais Garnier as meeting place and in so doing demonstrates how at the end of the 19th century the opera embraced all ranks of society under its roof:

> "On verra passer successivement: Princes du sang, ducs et pairs, maréchaux de camp, grands dignataires de la Couronne, ministres, présidents et conseillers du parlement et des autres cours, conseillers d'Etat, maîtres de requêtes, fermiers généraux, receveurs généraux, banquiers, administrateurs des domaines, des postes, de la loterie, de la caisse d'escompte, notaires, bourgeois et marchands, et enfin les filles de la mode, les courtisanes arrivées..."[160]

No other state institution could so successfully bring together such disparate interests, all of which were necessary to the successful functioning of the French state.

Throughout the most varied form of political regimes in France during the 19th century opera remained an ever present venue for the social interaction of ascendant classes. The modes of interaction were elaborate, emulating the increasingly formalised ostentation in vogue during the century. During this time many opera houses and venues changed to reflect the age. The Palais

Garnier was the culmination of the various elements which made opera so important to the French State. Not only was it to physically reflect the need to display the grandeur so intrinsic to Napoleon IIIs regime but it was to emphasize in its very configuration the size of the élite of that society by providing 2,000 seats and giving them a variety of public spaces in which to mingle. Never before had an opera house emphasized social interaction to such a degree. The performance space was arguably the least important element of the house. Even the auditorium was designed to provide maximum visibility from box to box and tier to tier. The traditional spaces of antechambers off boxes were retained and the capacity to deny entry to any unwelcome party more tightly guarded. But it was the grand staircase and the various marbled and stuccoed foyer spaces which allowed easy circulation and provided an incomparable environment in which to see and be seen. Then, there were the spaces reserved for the inner sanctum of French society where select male patrons could meet in the *foyer de danse*. Access was available dependent on rank and young ballerinas acted as discreet hostesses.

Thus the 19th century opened under the fading embers of revolution and quickly transformed into an autocratic empire. It closed with the steady respectable formulations of the IIIrd republic but during this entire period opera was supported by the state in France in every sense of the word.

3.3 Opera in the 20th Century

It is not of course possible to present an adequate account of the immense changes in population, wealth and communication systems of the 20th century, and one can only point here to certain features of those changes which bear particularly on the relationship of state and opera. The reader has at his or her disposal a wide range of cultural histories, such as the *Cambridge Modern History* Volumes XII 2nd revision and XIII. Extremely useful supplementary information may be found for example in John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Age of Uncertainty* or for a specifically British example see Janet Minihan's *The Nationalisation of Culture*.

The 20th century has seen great technological and social change which has produced a rapidly changing intellectual consciousness. Virtually from its

outset, social and political precepts were radically tested, and the modes of thought of the 19th century intelligentsia fundamentally challenged.

Population and demographic shifts have been a part of the emergence of a new social order. For example in Britain, the area known as 'Greater London', which at the turn of the century contained 6,528,434 inhabitants, during the ten year period between 1921-1931 increased in population by a staggering 9.7 per cent, and then totalled more than 8 million.[161] This urban population surge meant that London "included a fifth of the whole population of England and Wales."[162] The weight of the new 'mass' steadily increased in strength as a political and economic voice.

In France, the increase in overall population was not as dramatic as that of England.[163] However urbanisation of its population continued to rise dramatically in the same manner as that of Greater London as "The Paris region doubled its population in the 20th century."[164] The enfranchisement of a new and enlarged political class had a great effect on society as the mass now had a legal voice and the right to be heard.[165]

From the turn of the century, not only had the population increased notably but people had greater opportunities and choices in life brought about by their increased education. The continued raising of the age of compulsory education was significant.[166] David Thomson notes that in the early years of the century "The striking fact is that more and more children were staying longer at school, one in eight receiving some form of education after fourteen."[167] The general drift from the countryside continued, and the new urban population acquired more education, thus increasing literacy levels, as well as gaining new civic rights. These were important reasons contributing to the dynamic and changing nature of society at the beginning of the century and would affect the arts, especially those with traditionally élitist connotations, markedly. Sir Roy Shaw, Secretary General of the Arts Council of Great Britain (1975-1983) describes the process which was to be a precursor for the concepts of equality and accessibility in this century:

> "My own view is that no one is forcing anything on anybody - merely offering opportunities. In fact, the majority of people are really forced to settle for popular culture and have no opportunity to chose high culture because they lack the educational equipment which alone would open the door to high culture for them. Further, I would say that if culture, the experience of the arts, is such a good

thing - and we all assume that it is - is it not natural to want everyone to share it?"[168]

Shaw believes that education is the key to the "experience of the arts" and that once achieved there would be a general desire to participate in them. This notion dominates notions of cultural democracy today in all western countries.

Politically there were great changes. The revolutions in Russia and the rise of totalitarian states in Europe together with the global phenomenon of better communication led to great shifts in power. Institutions with their powers hitherto restricted to a small élite were now forced to take notice of mass aspirations, and the new language of democratic rights. New modes of communication such as radio, and later in the century television, were increasingly to become important in the realms of the dissemination of information, the formation of public opinion and as vehicles for the government's voice. It is significant that radio and television became known as the 'mass media', as they addressed their messages to this hitherto unenfranchised group.

The dilemma for the political classes was how to transform their state institutions to respond to the new ethos whilst maintaining their tradition and meaning. State institutions and social policy were increasingly to represent the interests of the previously disenfranchised. The paternalistic responsibilities of the patrician classes diminished as the mass view soon determined new structures. The old orders of aristocracy, bourgeoisie and intelligentsia often paid lip-service to the language of the changing world but to what degree would they be willing to relinquish domains which were traditionally their own?

In order to fully understand the playing out of this dichotomy it is important to distinguish between the three meanings of the term popular. They are: a) to be well-liked; b) a majority view; and c) the political Marxist meaning, that is, owned by the working class. Significantly, opera can be viewed as being in opposition to all three meanings. It is: a) not universally liked; b) in general a minority pursuit; and c) not owned in any sense of the word by the people.

The term 'common' is also important. Its meaning has changed significantly since the 1760s when Dr. Johnson used it as a term of praise.

Common sense' was the general understanding. In the 20th century common', like vulgar, has come to mean something coarse and uncultivated.

The eminent critic and cultural historian T.S. Eliot strove to distinguish between the conflicting notions of popular and selective accessibility to culture. He argued in his seminal work *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* that:

> "It is commonly assumed that there is culture, but that it is the property of a small section of society; and from this assumption it is usual to proceed to one or two conclusions: either that culture can only be the concern of a small minority, and that therefore there is no place for it in the society of the future; or that in the society of the future the culture which has been the possession of the few must be put at the disposal of everybody." [169]

Eliot seeks to analyse the emergence of the term 'culture' against the context of the pluralistic enfranchisement of society. Indeed, the traditional custodians of political and intellectual power were faced with a considerable challenge as they endeavoured to develop a language whereby the democratised mass were encouraged to believe that they were participating in that which had hitherto been inaccessible, whilst at the same time, reserving its essential function, the preservation of its traditional meaning and ritualistic visage.

Eliot's argument demonstrates the dichotomy evident in supporting the arts in general, and opera in particular, in 20th century democracies. The power of the mass and its enfranchisement was no longer simply a debatable concept but a political reality. All political fora had to account for such a social shift. Consequently the language employed by the state changed to accommodate such objectives.

John Carey's recent work *The Intellectuals and the Masses* supports such a view emphasizing the impact of such a generalised politicisation:

> "The one factor of utmost importance in the current political life of Europe is the accession of the masses to complete social power. This triumph of 'hyperdemocracy' has created the modern state."[170]

André Boll writing on the concept of '*opéra populaire*' during the volatile political events in France in 1968 supports such a view citing Jean Dutrand's definition of culture which incorporates the notion that access to culture is useful only if accompanied by breadth of education:

> "Culture: activité encouragée par le gouvernement ayant pour but de faire connaître les mobiles de M. Calder et les drames de M. Gatti à des gens qui ne savent pas qui sont Molière et Michel-Ange."[171]

thus suggesting that it is not only important for the masses to gain social power but in order to make use of it they need to have harnessed the skills which bring about culture. Carey also suggests that it was through the successful invasion of the traditional symbolic places of power lauded by the old order, that the new democratised state created the building blocks of its new order, and that:

> "The crowd has taken possession of places which were created by civilization for the best people."[172]

Eliot suggests that culture "must be at the disposal of everybody" but the understood definition of culture remained solidly fixed in the traditional structures designed for participation of the 'fortunate few' or the '200 families' with an ever increasing band of interested onlookers.

Scannell introduces the notion that the language of democracy was to provide the crucial link in the evolution of the fast changing society of the early 20th century although he does not extend his analysis further to challenge the reasons for this linguistic evolution. His theory is interesting, however, for he identifies the concepts of "preservation" and "continuity" as being fundamental and pivotal areas of this transition:

> "The nation-state was distinguished from government and its values and loyalties, embodied in the monarchy, transcended politics. Both were presumed to be in harmony with each other. If government and people had a common interest in the effective and efficient working of democracy, then this secured the preservation and continuity of the nation in unity."[173]

It was, in his view, the BBC and the increased use of radio as a vector of information and propaganda, which cemented the relationship between government and the mass.

Asa Briggs suggests that as the BBC became accepted as a national institution it gained credence with both sides of society:

> "By 1927 it was an 'institution', a recognised power in the State as well as in society."[174]

Of course, as Briggs points out, the BBC has in a few notable cases defined its rôle by acting as a mediator between the ruling classes and the mass. It is illustrated by the fact that during the strikes in 1926 Lord Reith managed to maintain a high level of independence, transmitting information about the strikes to all. Although many believed that the BBC was merely a pawn of the government, Reith's intention, which he made clear in a number

of statements and confidential documents, was for the institution to maintain its independence and the faith of both sides of the dispute without acting illegally.[175]

In terms of opera, the BBC initiated some of the first moves towards its popularisation, firstly by transmitting Dame Nellie Melba singing *Hello to the World* on 15th June 1920, which Briggs describes as "a turning point in the public's response to radio"[176] and secondly by appearing to champion the democratic cause by trying to make opera more accessible to the people. However this was a linguistic ploy. The BBC's values were very much on the side of traditional culture and its financial support of opera and classical music demonstrate this:

> "*Wozzeck* cost 'well over a thousand pounds to broadcast' and four classic symphonies conducted by Toscanini more than £2,000: 'the Royal Command Performance' was not broadcast because £75 was all the BBC would offer."[177]

Briggs describes this attempt by the BBC as "Perversely the BBC got its priorities upside down"[178] but surely, as has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, it was acting in the interests of the part of society which all its members from Lord Reith down very much represented. Their duty was to educate and represent, not to change the precepts of culture.

In France, this social transition is evident through an exploration of the cultural language employed since the First World War, when the state openly assumed full responsibility as 'patron of the arts'. Since this time one can witness the constant definition and redefinition of such responsibilities. The pre-eminent rôle of opera as a bastion of cultural excellence remained unchallenged over this period, supported by the socialist regimes of the Popular Front (1936-1939) and François Mitterrand's government (1981-1995) as well as that of the conservative government of Charles de Gaulle (1956-1972) and his Minister of Cultural Affairs, André Malraux.

In his challenging study on the nature of the cultural state, Marc Fumaroli suggests that the rôle of the state became that of a cultural minder determining in a paternalistic sense that which is good for the people and thus practising demagogic cultural politique. He ascribes to this the same significance as that of religious ceremonial, supporting the notion that the state was deeply influenced by the church's ritualistic methodology which it went on to

ncorporate into its own ceremonial display. He challenges the notion of supposed liberality of the democratic state, essentially arguing that it is a veiled linguistic subterfuge:

> "L'État culturel n'est pas libéral. On peut même se demander si, enclavé dans une démocratie libérale, il n'est pas un alibi et un obstacle à la vitalité de celle-ci, à sa capacité de répondre au défi que les sociétés modernes, même libérales, posent à l'esprit."[179]

Furthermore he advances the theory that this "alibi" was designed to reserve or the traditional élite its conventional spheres of interest, and that it was in he field of culture that the state determined its ethic:

> "Sous couleur de 'démocratisation' des Arts et Lettres anciens, le Pouvoir fait mine en effet de réserver pour l'exportation et la consommation d'une 'élite' un 'secteur privilégié' qui, grâce à sa haute protection et subvention, serait indemne de la vulgarité médiatique 'pour tous'. C'est un secret, réservé à l'oligarchie, mais c'est bien là le fond hypocrite de la 'democratisation' culturelle."[180]

The very basis of Fumaroli's hypothesis is that duplicitous language is used y the state through its rhetoric to disguise and determine its real intentions.

Theodor Adorno demonstrates this situation well in relation to opera in his escription of the 20th century conflict between the individual and the mass. Writing on the *Sociology of Opera* he declares:

> "As everyone knows, however, society after World War II is ideologically far too levelled to dare have its cultural privilege so crassly demonstrated to the masses. Today there is hardly any real old-line society like that economic backer of operas in which it found itself intellectually reflected, and the new luxury class eschews ostentation. Despite the economic flowering of the period, the individual's sense of impotence, if not indeed his fear of a potential conflict with the masses, is far too deeply ingrained."[181]

oll concurs with this view suggesting that popular culture is no more than a ourgeois construct designed to protect that class's interests:

> "Cette culture populaire n'a été jusqu'à ce jour qu'un mythe visant à démocratiser de façon peu au prou démagaogique, les produits issues de la bourgeoisie, dont bénéficiaient, dans le cadre de la société capitaliste, les privilégiés de cette classe."[182]

alraux's speech on becoming Minister of Cultural Affairs on d February 1959 is a flagrant example of the distortion of language to give n impression of cultural enfranchisement for the masses:

> "Le ministre d'État ... a pour mission de rendre accessibles les oeuvres capitales de l'humanité, et d'abord de la France, au plus grand nombre possible de Français, d'assurer la plus vaste audience à notre patrimoine culturel et de favoriser la création des oeuvres d'art et de l'esprit qui l'enrichissent."[183]

The notion of accessibility is extremely important, and cannot be overlooked, when considering 20th century trends in the arts. It is a term which was to dominate cultural language. 'Access' and 'democracy' were employed by politicians and intellectuals alike as if they were 'natural' partners in the same way as divine right was the natural order of Louis XIV's reign. This was well expressed in the brief given to architects competing to design the new opera house in 1983 by the French Ministry of Culture. Section II of the brief is entitled *The Objectives: Make Opera Accessible to All* and goes on to explain that the constraints of an opera house built for an oligarchic society no longer reflect the requirements of democratic society of this century. Therefore a new house was needed in order to reflect this new ethos:

> **"I.The need for a new Opera House in Paris**
> The building of a new Opera House is justified both by the expectations of a wide audience currently excluded from opera...
> The Paris Opera, the Palais Garnier, designed at the end of the Second Empire, was opened in 1873 in the sumptuous beginnings of the Third Republic by an oligarchic society, quite different from our own..."[184]

Fumaroli explains that even the term 'modern' is in the French sense a euphemism for traditional notions and habits, of which opera is one, its antecedents dating from notions established under the highly stylised reign of Louis XIV.

> "Ni l'adjectif moderne, ni le substantif modernité ne sont nouveaux en France. Et de même que l'État culturel se rêve des ancêtres au siècle de Louis le Grand et de Colbert, la Modernité d'état, qui est son style, se cherche volontiers une généalogie chez les Modernes du temps du Grand Roi, dédaigneux d'Homère et de Virgile, admirateurs de Descartes et de Malebranche, amateurs d'opéras et de contes de fées."[185]

The most unifying concept to come out of the polemic in terms of the state and culture was that the 'State as Patron' became the ethos of 20th century governments. By the mid-1930s both France and England had made important gestures in this domain and although there is much divergence of opinion as to the manner in which to apply state intervention, the critical concept was accepted and applied: that is, that some form of state support through subvention was to become the core of support for the arts.

In France, which historically had never shied from perceiving the state as patron, subvention was dispatched directly from ministerial budgets. England has a tradition of sceptical reservation towards subvention of the arts by the state. The actor-manager Beerbohm Tree wrote the following words, for a

lecture to the Playgoers' Club, in 1891. We witness here early hostility to 'state' art, and state subsidy based on the common belief at the beginning of the century that the state was too close to the arts and that French cultural institutions were artistically dead:

> "It is an open question, however, in a country in which individualism in all departments has taken strong root, and where state encouragement or interference is looked upon askance – whether a national or subsidised theatre would be for the benefit of the community."[186]

This sceptical 19th century view was supplanted with the formation of the CEMA and then the Arts Council of Great Britain.

There was a slow evolution towards subvention during the Second World War with the formation of the CEMA until the creation of The Arts Council. (Both were dependent on a long-standing concept of 'arms length' funding, which will be addressed later.) Britain was more or less hostile to state subvention until the Second World War. Then, in 1939, Entertainment National Services Association (ENSA) was formed to deal with entertainment and the popular arts for servicemen and women. In 1940, CEMA, the Committee, later the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts was created. It was the latter which became, in 1945, the new Arts Council of Great Britain, and which almost immediately started to 'fund opera'. The former, ENSA, which one might say existed for the 'mass', was simply snuffed out at the end of the war.

It is important to say that the decision to create the Arts Council from CEMA was not in any sense democratic. It was not in either party's manifesto, and was never debated in parliament. The Arts Council's rôle according to Evans and Glascow was to make a patron of the state and thus fulfil what was incorrectly perceived as a modern gap in patronage:

> "Once the loss of the patron had been felt, the State which had destroyed the patron by heavy taxation had itself to step in, by some means or other, if the functions of patronage were to continue. Though in England one could not expect this to happen neatly or logically, yet it was the necessity for continuing the most stimulating elements of patronage at its best that led to activities such as those of the Arts Council of Great Britain"[187]

Writing in 1963 the cultural historian Herbert Read sets out the fundamental difference between the English approach to subsidy by suggesting that it is an ideological issue. His notion that art cannot be defined

in economic terms is one rarely heard in the language of those bodies responsible for state subvention today:

> "Patronage of some kind is essential, but it is only tolerable when accompanied by liberty. Patronage need not imply servitude. True patronage is a tribute to the genius of the artist and a recognition of the fact that the quality we call art cannot be assessed in economic terms."[188]

Read also recognises the political agenda which art can be made to serve:

> "Now, art is too closely related to education and propaganda to be neglected by a totalitarian régime,..."[189]

and that the so-called enlightening attributes of education can also be used as a kind of control mechanism when in the hands of the state. One new form of subsidised media, the BBC, according to Scannell, very quickly understood how to utilise this connection between state and ritual:

> "As it became a centralized, national institution the fundamental task undertaken by the BBC, in its programme service, was the mediation of class differences in the name of a higher national unity. The presentation of royalty was the cornerstone of this work. Broadcasting revitalized the power of monarchy as a transcending value, above the levels of social and political strife, which united all classes."[190]

These same values were to be explored through a much more subtle language however, in the more traditional arts. Lord Keynes, writing in 1945, explicitly describes the intention of the newly formed Arts Council of Great Britain in the following terms:

> "At last the public exchequer has recognised the support and encouragement of the civilizing arts of life as a part of their duty."[191]

thus clearly stating that as access to the arts was increasing, "civilizing arts" were to become a model for state support. This realisation was, as Keynes admitted, a result of dramatic social change:

> "Our war-time experience has led us already to one clear discovery: the unsatisfied demand and the enormous public for serious and fine entertainment."[192]

No quantum leap is required by the reader to comprehend that by reacting in such a way the Arts Council hoped to determine and control that which was "serious" and "fine". Furthermore Keynes recognises the rôle which monumental state architecture could play in supporting such references. He even evokes the sentiment which was to provide the basis for the cultural battles of the cold war period:

> "I hope that a reasonable allotment of resources will be set aside each year for the repair and erection of the buildings we shall need. I hear that in Russia theatres and concert-halls are given a very high priority in building."[193]

John Pick suggests that this language reveals an even more insidious aim. Not only was the Arts Council to compare itself with Russian theatres, but it was to adopt the methodology of Moscow's Ministry of Culture:

> "Demanding from its remaining clients development strategies, three-year plans and market forecasts..."[194]

In the light of such interventionist thought it is hardly surprising that Britain would save the jewel in its cultural crown, as did Russia with its national opera, the Bolshoi. Thus Covent Garden was to be rescued from its seeming fate as a dance hall. Keynes clearly juxtaposed the notions of high art and popular entertainment by referring to Covent Garden and the Crystal Palace in one paragraph and thus distinguished effectively between their metaphoric rôles:

> "The Royal Opera House at Covent Garden has been diverted to other purposes throughout the war. The Crystal Palace has been burnt to the ground. We hope that Covent Garden will be re-opened early next year as the home of opera and ballet. ... The Arts Council has joined with the Trustees of the Crystal Palace in the preparation of plans to make that once again a great People's Palace."[195]

t could seem surprising that the Crystal Palace, built as we have seen in Chapter 3.2.1 to display the greatness of the Victorian era, was described as having once been a "People's Palace". Yet, the new political language of the day dictated such revisionist rhetoric. *The Times* also appears to enthusiastically ascribe to the idea of a People's Palace which in fact, given he tone of language used, is condescendingly creating an image of an educational project for the cultural development of a certain class of people confined to a demographic area and thus social class:

> "A People's Palace in which the greatest singers, musicians and dramatists would perform ... outlined plans to make the People's Palace a cultural, education and entertainment centre for East London ... because of the new arrangement with the BBC, the Palace had acquired new prestige ... the cultural enlightenment of East London.[196]

Keynes puts paid to the notion that this new Arts Council was independent of government, acting as it were with a magnanimous cultural brief. He stresses the inextricable dependence of the 'arms length' Arts Council on the state for funding and conduct:

> "Henceforward we are to be a permanent body, independent in constitution, free from red tape, but financed by the Treasury and ultimately responsible to Parliament, which will have to be satisfied with what we are doing when from time

to time it votes us money. If we behave foolishly any Member of Parliament will be able to question the Chancellor of the Exchequer and ask why....
I do not believe it is yet realized what an important thing has happened. State patronage of the arts has crept in. It has happened in a very English, informal, unostentatious way – half baked if you like. A semi-independent body is provided with modest funds ... to present public enjoyment of the arts of drama, music and painting."[197]

The claim that this is a rather nice "half-baked" manner of state support might be seen as an attempt to disguise the fact that Britain, like its European counterparts, has decided to control the dissemination of culture under the guise of seemingly benevolent subvention.

The following letter written on 1st August 1946 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Sir John Anderson, effectively illustrates the importance which opera held to the state. Thus opera could be assured that it would not be "let down" even if that meant encroaching on the Arts Council's arm's length territory. Indeed "to feel themselves responsible" for funding and thus decision making, is very different from 'being responsible' for it.

"This is in reply to your letter of the 26th July, in which you ask me to review my attitude to the Covent Garden Trust as expressed in my letter to Pooley of the 15th July.

The assistance which the Covent Garden Trust receives from the Exchequer will, of course, come to it through the Arts Council. You will understand that in general I should wish the Council to feel themselves responsible for the allocation of the funds which Parliament puts at their disposal, and to plan their work ahead in the expectation of an assured but limited grant.

I recognise, however, that the magnitude of the Covent Garden undertaking and the difficulty in present circumstances of estimating its future needs places it in a special position, and that the State will be assuming a definite obligation to see to it that, subject to others playing their part, Opera is not let down. I do not therefore rule out the possibility that the fulfilment of this obligation might in certain circumstances make it necessary to increase the Treasury grant to the Arts Council still further than I undertook in my letter of the 15th July"[198]

This letter clearly indicates the intention of government. It speaks of potentially increasing the grant to the Arts Council, but clearly states that it means that the grant to Covent Garden will be increased. The arm's length Arts Council in this sense is only acting as a disburser of funds, the destination of which have been pre-determined by government.

In 1991 *Opera Now* highlighted the dichotomy between support for opera and democratisation:

"The art (opera) continues to grow more expensive. The root cause, ironically, is democratization. On the one hand opera is labour-intensive, and while orchestras and choruses and stage staffs are not paid fortunes, the days of cheap labour have gone. On the other hand the audience for opera has broadened but because most opera runs at a loss, meeting the demand costs more than resisting it."[199]

The paradox is clear yet whatever the public outcry may appear to be opera will continue to be supported by the state.

3.3.1 General evolution of opera

Having established that the notions of state subvention are common to western governments in the 20th century, this study will now concentrate on the motives of governments in continuing to support opera and opera houses. Such motives have been blurred by the fact that most European governments by 1950 had committed themselves to some kind of democratic programme of state support for the arts in general. Those same states however continued to support, and in some cases create, operatic institutions. Littlejohn demonstrates the proliferation of such state supported operas both in the traditional centres of opera and the newer states:

> "I once thought it unlikely that any city would ever again spend the $130 million (which was ten times the first estimates) that Sydney, Australia, devoted to its opera house between 1957 and 1973 – until the city of Paris found itself, between 1982 and 1989, spending $400 million on the politically embattled new Opera-Bastille. In the last few years, Cairo, Essen, Hong Kong, Houston and Ludwigsburg have all opened impressive new houses: those in Frankfurt (after a fire), Genoa and Munich closed down for costly rebuilding."[200]

These were funded to a much higher level than the other arts whilst cultural policies the states espoused, paid lip-service to the notions of wide-scale and equal support for all the arts. Furthermore opera goers are better treated than other minorities in that the services provided for them in comparison with the proportion of expenditure between personal and public purse is the greatest. Yet the facilities provided are markedly different from other experiences be it the attire of the doorkeeper, or the public spaces of foyers, or the quality of the programmes and the products advertised in them, or the beverages sold at the theatre. The funding of opera does not suggest that it is viewed as part of a continuum but an exception. No one would expect professional orchestras, for example, to receive such handsome state support.

It has been noted that the 20th century is plainly a century of monumental social and technological change. Again it should be thought remarkable that opera or opera going has remained consistent in form throughout major events such as social revolution in Russia, two world wars involving the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Germany and the vast

changes in communication brought about by media. Such continuity is evident, for example, in the following passage written by White which draws upon the traditional meaning of opera.

> "In 1953 H.M. Queen Elizabeth II gave Britten permission to compose an opera to mark the occasion of her Coronation, and *Gloriana* was produced at a gala performance in the presence of the Queen and members of the Royal Family."[201]

Indeed one would scarcely think that he was writing of a period only eight years after the Second World War, nor that mass media had totally altered the face of society, for such a description would hardly have altered since the times of the first Elizabeth.

The same held true when Prime Minister Macmillan visited the Communist rulers in 1957, at the height of the Berlin crisis when he 'took his honoured position in the Royal Box at the Bolshoi theatre, alongside the mighty Russian rulers', a description which could almost have come from Tsarist times.

Even more remarkably the newly reconstructed German state held onto the essential meaning of opera as demonstrated by this passage written in 1955 and published in the *Covent Garden Opera Annual*:

> "So, insofar as general intellectual and stylistic tendencies of our time have not brought about a change in the very essence of opera and its formal realisation on the stage, the creation of countless new theatres has not altered the nature of German operatic life, nor uprooted its traditions. In the new buildings as in the old the same laws that have governed the various regional and local preferences since the beginning of German operatic history are still responsible for the angle from which opera is viewed. Irrespective of the complex and fundamental inner development to which opera is being subjected today, in that it testifies to the creative spirit, it has remained unchanged for two hundred years as a theatrical institution and in its effect on the public. It appeals to the emotions of its audience more than any other type of art; it is in fact one of the few phenomena by which people allow themselves to be emotionally touched in this overcivilized, highly technical and intellectual age."[202]

If we are to accept Carey's hypothesis such a description is not surprising, incorporating as it does, a traditional view of opera endorsed as much by Germany's recent totalitarian past and linking this to its modern democratic principles. For Carey, opera contains all the references which he suggests additionally involve continuity and high art.

> "The superiority of 'high' art, the eternal glory of Greek sculpture and architecture, the transcendent value of the old masters and of classical music, the supremacy of Shakespeare and Goethe and other authors acknowledged by intellectuals as great, the divine spark that animates all productions of genius

and distinguishes them from the low amusements of the mass – these were among Hitler's most dearly held beliefs."[203]

The remnants of the Second World War displayed their external scars on the great European opera houses but their essential meaning and function were hardly scathed. Frank Howes describes the condition in which the great European opera houses were to be found at the end of the war:

> "In 1945 the Vienna Opera was a heap of rubble; the Hamburg Opera, having lost its auditorium, converted its stage into a theatre; La Scala at Milan was repairing its bomb damage; Covent Garden, physically intact, was a dance-hall run by a catering firm."[204]

Yet these houses were rebuilt, or 'saved' from other functions. Howes suggests that this was due to an enlightened popularism:

> "But war damage to opera was offset by an unexpected war gain – British armies discovered opera as an entertainment worthy of civilian patronage. CEMA and ENSA had accustomed timid politicians to the idea of subsidy, and private initiative set out to restore the Royal Opera House to its proper use."[205]

Furthermore opera is supported uniformly by modern states whatever their political allegiance. Littlejohn notes that:

> "On the other side of the now-melted Iron Curtain, every communist government in Europe has subsidised at least one opera company, often lavishly. (One of the collateral losses of a 'reunified Germany' and of a decommunised Eastern Europe is likely to be the loss or reduction of many of these subsidies). The Sydney Opera House, the Opera-Bastille, recent visits of opera companies to Japan and Hong Kong (which are very costly to the host country), and the more than 200 new opera companies started in the United States in recent decades are all evidence of the symbolic importance, the political prestige, and the public relations value of opera, and hence its probable survival."[206]

Thus illustrating the very important motives of the modern state in supporting an essentially 19th century institution.

3.3.2 England

In England, the importance of opera was equated with a source of national pride and with the rise of an influential nationalist movement, which sought to strengthen its roots in British soil. Opera in England became synonymous with the language of glory and cultural domination and was translated as such into cultural policy.

Opera was revived at the beginning of the century by grand patrons who despite their idiosyncrasies brought a continuum to opera throughout the war years. Sir Thomas Beecham ruined himself financially in his undaunted quest

to provide opera at Covent Garden and John Christie created the prestigious Glyndebourne festival. Opera was to remain within the 19th century tradition until after the war when the state took over in its rôle as patron, largely ignoring the contributions which both Beecham and Christie had made. The new notion of opera was very much that of a state event, both financed and produced by the new bureaucratic classes and aided by the aristocracy.

The French critic Bovier-Lapierre explains that for post-war Britain opera represents an unconscious desire to link the nation to a continuum based on a vision of a great past when school children could look at maps of the world and gasp in awe at the countries coloured pink:

> "L'opéra est objet de la tentation, souvent inconscient mais toujours présente, de la classe politique, de l'intelligentsia et d'une partie du public, britannique, d'y réinvestir l'idéal conquérant jadis exalté dans l'hymne Britannia rules the waves."[207]

His hypothesis suggests why opera represents continuity but it does not explain why the language of British governments should not give that as their prime reason for supporting opera. Yet the motives of successive British governments were more complicated than this.

As early as 1946, it can be observed in the manifesto by Boosey and Hawkes, that Covent Garden was to act as a beacon of national culture, preserving traditions and national pride:

> "We hope to re-establish Covent Garden as a centre of opera and ballet worthy of the highest musical traditions. The main purpose will be to ensure for Covent Garden an independent position as an international opera house with sufficient funds at its disposal to enable it to devote itself to a long-term programme, giving to London throughout the year the best in English opera and ballet, together with the best from all over the world. If this ambition can be realized it is felt that it will prove to be a great incentive to artists and composers, since it will offer to them an opportunity for experience in the performing and writing of operas on a scale equal to that which has prevailed so long on the Continent but has been lacking so long in our musical life here in London."[208]

This manifesto is in a sense modern because it acknowledges the new ethos of society and yet it clearly calls upon the language of tradition and English glory so familiar in operatic debates since the 18th century.

Bovier-Lapierre further supports the view that opera was an institution which Britain used to promote a sense of national greatness. It symbolised historic continuity as well as pride in the glories of past eras. It also expressed

a positive vision of the present, building on past achievements and giving hope to a society so obviously concerned with pressing socio/economic difficulties.

> "1945 vit à la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la prise de conscience du déclin irremédiable de l'Empire, et l'impulsion décisive donnée à la politique d'implantations lyriques permanentes en Grande-Bretagne. L'adoption de l'opéra apparait donc liée à la disparition de l'idée impériale rejetée dans la gloire d'un passé disparu, voire desavouée et contestée. La réalité déplaisante d'une Grande Bretagne réduite à elle-même ou aux mornes horizons de l'intégration européenne, favorisa l'acceuil de l'art lyrique, notamment dans les classes moyennes qui soutinrent l'effort impérial et ne se voyaient plus proposer d'autre rêves que le Welfare State et la lutte contre l'inflation. ... Après l'horizon des océans, l'imaginaire proposé par l'opéra est celui des grands drames lyriques, même s'il apparaît souvent reconstruit au prisme des traditions, des goûts et des structures mentales britanniques."[209]

He identifies the national malaise brought about by the awareness that the days of the Empire were numbered and that the interests of the mass, so inculcated in the concept of the Welfare State were to change the structure of British society. In such a context, holding on to such deeply embedded national traditions would be vital if the traditional emblems of power were to survive.

Democratisation was the by-word of post-war language. Dent named his book supporting English opera *A Theatre for Everybody* clearly calling upon the new notions of democratisation and culture. As one of the great exponents of the popularisation of opera, he helped create a new tradition employing its terminology and ideology:

> "But it does not seem to me unreasonable to suppose that the war has awakened in many hundreds of thousands of people a realisation that many things which formerly they had considered to be too high-brow or too grand for them are now easily within their imaginative and financial grasp; and that many things which used to be considered the pleasant amenities of a fortunate few, should more rightly be regarded as universal necessities."[210]

Yet Dent calls upon the traditional language of national pride to support his 'modern' views and interprets state support of the arts as a cultural policy which will enhance the national image that had previously been displayed on battlefields or in the realms of economic ascendance:

> "Britannia, waging her most desperate war, has decided that the pen, the harp, and the buskin must be added to shield and trident. In practical terms the State, carefully protected against undesirable exploitation, is prepared to spend a little money on opera."[211]

The analogy which he uses bears a remarkable similarity to those employed by Hitler a very few years earlier who, according to Carey, cited the

opera house as an illustration of Germany's ascendance over American culture and thus inferred that cultural politics were at the heart of national ascendance:

> "The Americans, Hitler conceded, possessed cars, clothes and refrigerators, but the German Reich could boast 270 opera houses and a standard of culture of which America could have no conception."[212]

Dent, who supported the opera in English movement, challenges the notion that opera's real meaning had hitherto been better represented in foreign theatres. His desire to promote English opera was clearly a desire for the new English opera to take on all the connotations of grandness of the past:

> "Opera to be 'grand' had to be foreign, and it followed that English opera unable to afford real 'grandeur', had to be shabby, dowdy and provincial."[213]

These notions were to some extent countered by those who distinguished between performance and the meaning of the house. *The Times* in 1947 suggested that:

> "There has been a certain amount of misplaced criticism of present Covent Garden operatic productions based on comparison with the 'grand' seasons of the past. .... For the performance of last night was better than those of old."[214]

Harold Rosenthal however, cleverly managed to combine both concepts of social and musical tradition, which slowly became incorporated into the generally accepted terminology of the state and critics alike:

> "Before 1939 Covent Garden can be said to have had a glorious operatic history, but little in the way of a permanent tradition. The post-war Royal Opera on the other hand has not only added to that history, but has helped to establish the first real operatic traditions in that great house."[215]

Thus the attempt to institutionalise grandeur was incorporated into the new language of opera's supporters. This is demonstrated in post-war journalism which focused on nationalist language and symbolism:

> "In a statement of policy accompanying Mr Rankl's appointment, the C.G.O.T. points out that it has as its aim not merely the organisation of occasional opera seasons but the foundation at Covent Garden of a permanent national institution which will give opportunity and training to British artists.[216]

Furthermore the demand for anglicization of operatic language stirs arguments frequently developed since Addison and Steele first ridiculed opera. Now, with the help of government subvention, and popularisation of the concepts of entertainment and culture, their aim was close to being realised:

> "The immediate purpose of the Trust, however, is to establish at the Royal Opera House a resident opera company and a residential ballet company of the highest standard mainly of British artists....
> BRITISH ARTISTS

> The associate conductors, the musical staff, the singers and producers, with extremely few exceptions will be British. The soloists will be chosen almost entirely from among singers already known in this country and from unknown singers discovered in the auditions which are still being held in London and the provinces.
>
> The trust, it is stated, believes that the development of opera in England – and, indeed, the formation of a style of performance – depends to a large extent on the use of English. The performances of the resident company will therefore be given in English. The trust intends to do everything in its power to secure a high standard of English translation where none exists at present, and to attempt, in collaboration, to secure the adoption of standard English versions by schools, teachers and opera companies throughout the English speaking world."[217]

This policy however did not last later than the early 1960s. It was out of harmony with the British operatic tradition. Opera in English would exist as it always had done but in another place. The Royal Opera needed a broader space which a strict nationalist and linguistic policy would thwart. The language of accessibility and equality would dominate official declamations but yet again opera's essential meaning remained unchallenged. An example of duplicitous language designed to make today's public believe that they have access to the real experience of opera is demonstrated by Michael Wood's description of royal galas:

> "Galas are survivals of a bygone and almost forgotten age -- when it was normal for men to wear white ties and women their best clothes and jewels if they went to the opera. The audience then was drawn from a very small select group of the well-to-do. *Now all can, and do, go and wear whatever clothes they like.*"[218] (my italics)

Nowadays the idea of the opera house is challenged yet again by those sceptical of government rhetoric. Its outer core is apparently under threat as it has been so many times before and yet is this no more than a post-war stately house syndrome? Does it matter if the house crumbles as long as the institution survives?

> "As was revealed last week, the Royal Opera House (ROH) is living on borrowed time and faces closure under prospective EC health, safety and workplace directives. The notion of a decaying theatre in Covent Garden, derelict and empty, was raised. It would be a national disgrace, said the ROH.
>
> It was a remarkable piece of intelligence from a house frequently portrayed as a place where only fully-paid up members of the elite are to be found."[219]

It has become fashionable to deny the fact that the opera is an élitist institution. Those responsible for the Royal Opera today are at pains to stress that in order to justify its existence it needs to be perceived in terms of contemporary arts terminology as 'accessible' to the general public. The argument most commonly used to justify this is that the opera's extramural

following is as important to the notion of opera as those who partake of the total experience. This, as will be demonstrated more completely in Chapter 4.2, is essentially a fragile if not fraudulent justification. Opera means the total experience in the minds of the public in general and no 'State speak' will shift such opinion. Adorno illustrates this point well when he wrote that: "Opera, more than any other form, represents traditional bourgeois culture..."[220] and certainly the Royal Opera House and its audience could not be described as being representative of contemporary British society. According to Crispian Palmer:

> "The government, which blames bad management, is worried that Britain's flagship arts organization has become too elitist."[221]

Yet that is precisely the nature of a flagship institution which cannot possibly house the masses. There is an apparent conflict not only in terminology but in thinking.

This debate about what the opera house should represent, i.e. 'accessibility' or 'élitism', is well documented in a rather venomous and public exchange of correspondence between the recently knighted (June 1996) Jeremy Isaacs and Sunday Times reporter Hugh Canning:

> "HUGH CANNING (October 23), rather intemperately I thought, denounced the Royal Opera House as unpopular and its prices as too high. Unpopular with whom? Not with the half million who enjoy our performances each season, nor the millions who watch them on radio and television, nor with the schools, hospitals and community centres that benefit from our educational and outreach work.
> Our prices are high, it is true, but as Canning once briefly appeared to have grasped, our grant from the Arts Council is low. The Royal Opera House has to earn a high proportion – 60% – of its income. If the grant were ever to be raised (it would have to be trebled) to levels available to comparable houses in Europe, patrons would find our prices cut dramatically.
> Even a modest increase in grant, beyond RPI, could enable us to cut some prices. Every little helps. At the moment, though, we are promised a standstill, a cut in real terms."[222]

Hugh Canning replied:

> "Jeremy Isaacs misses my point. Many pastimes - fox-hunting, boxing - are popular with those who participate and attend, but 'unpopular' with the general public. *The Royal Opera House has an image of privilege and inaccessibility....*"[223] (my italics)

The Canning-Isaacs controversy recalls the three classic definitions of 'popular', cited earlier.

It is argued by many that as opera becomes more popular due to the larger audience brought by modern media that its subvention should increase accordingly. Maryvonne de Saint Pulgent points out that the Metropolitan Opera in New York has consistently used radio and television to promote its image as a national opera company, thus endeavouring to create the illusion that the opera is an activity which all citizens can partake in.

> "C'est ce qu'a très bien compris le Met, qui utilise depuis un demi-siècle la radio, et depuis vingt ans la télévision, pour conforter son statut de 'compagnie nationale américaine', ralier à son panache l'immense population qui n'aura jamais l'occasion de s'asseoir dans ses fauteuils, et surtout la démarcher à travers la 'Metropolitan Opera Guild' pour qu'elle apporte son obole au fonctionnement du théatre."[224]

This, however, is far from the truth. The notion of an opera may have been popularised through broadcasting but the experience of opera, the dressing up, going to, being there, cannot be reproduced over the airwaves and so the Met remains today the bastion of the élite. And yet the Royal Opera House is extremely keen to demonstrate just how broad its base is. In the 1985/86 Annual Report of the Royal Opera House, Sir Claus Moser, the House's Chairman wrote:

> "Those who choose to characterise us simply as a House for Grand Opera must be reminded of the range of opera and ballet performances, of tours at home and abroad, of the educational programmes, performances in the Tent, the Proms, the Schools Matinees, the Hamlyn Week, TV and radio, and the manifold activities of the Friends of Covent Garden. Of course we want to do much more to widen audiences, and above all, if finances allow, to bring seat prices down."[225]

as if this broadening of familiarity with the house and repertoire somehow broadened the meaning of opera.

Today the Royal Opera House seems to have reversed some of its democratic state-speak. In 1995, the day after receiving a considerable grant towards its building fund from the proceeds of the lottery, the Royal Opera closed down its school programme. It argued that although it had just received a large injection of funding this was only available for the refurbishment of the building and was not to be used on special programmes. Thus both funding body and managers were not prepared to defend the art over the institution. Moreover seating prices at the Royal Opera are amongst the highest in Europe and yet the house is in general full. Robert Maycock highlights how far the situation has moved since 1945 in terms of propaganda at least:

"...the ROH seems to be able to keep the stalls filled no matter how much it charges for them. Unfortunately there is a social price, in that a growing proportion of the potential audience becomes unable to afford a ticket. Not only does that reverse the democratizing process, it contradicts the duty of the Arts Council, whose charter required it 'in particular to increase the accessibility of the fine arts to the public'."[226]

Thus we see that the notions of the meaning of opera have become less indigenous to each nation and therefore more international. Opera and opera policy in the United States in many ways resembles that of Great Britain. It is the way in which the state or those in power choose to support opera which changes nationally however its meaning in the 20th century context does not.

3.3.3 France

In France, opera's political significance has long been incorporated as possessing a natural place in the state's cultural policy. This is demonstrated in the opening remarks of Raymond Soubie's report to Government on the running of the Palais Garnier in 1980s[227] where he distinctly makes the point that the Paris Opéra is closely linked to the fortunes of political power.

"L'Opéra de Paris a toujours été étroitement lié au pouvoir politique. Tout comme en Italie, l'art lyrique a pris son essor en France à la cour, mais son évolution est encore plus qu'ailleurs marquée par les bouleversements qui secouèrent le pays au fil des siècles, de Louis XIV à la cinquième République. Lieu d'ostentation priviligié des monarches et chefs d'Etat, l'Opéra reste avant tout le symbol éclatant de la 'vie parisienne'."[228]

and further lends support to this analysis of the evolution of opera's relationship with the state where he stresses the continuity of the institution over that of the changing reins of political power:

"La chute de la Royauté n'entraîna pas celle de l'Opéra. D'Académie Royale, il devint Opéra National à la Révolution. Au XIXè siècle, il changea plusieurs fois de nom et occupa diverses salles, mais sans conteste, l'Opéra dès sa naissance a été placé sous le signe de la permanence. Jamais on n'envisagea sa fermeture, malgré les multiples changements de pouvoir, et son prestige ne cessa de croître jusqu'à la troisième République: ... Devenu sous le second Empire l'un des tous premiers théâtres lyriques du monde, c'est encore une fois le pouvoir politique qui décida de son avenir. Napoléon III voulut donner à l'Opéra une place 'digne' de lui, au coeur du quartier des affaires et des salons. ... Ainsi, issu de rêves impériaux de Napoléon III, le Palais Garnier fut inauguré par la troisième République qui en assuma sans reticence l'heritage."[229]

Direct and open responsibility for the opera first occurred in 1932 when:

"pour la première fois, la subvention est plus importante que les recettes propres de l'Opéra: 9 375 000 F contre 7 601 583, Dès lors, elle ne fera que croître...."[230]

The decisive moment in which the state took direct responsibility for the arts occurred on 14th January 1939 when the Opéra became part of the *Réunion des Théàtres Lyriques Nationaux* and as Soubie remarks "entre ainsi de plein pied dans le secteur public".[231]

He furthermore identifies this decision by the state as an assumption of its "royal heritage":

> "La République prend et assume alors totalement, en ce mois de janvier 1939, l'héritage royal."[232]

Boll questions the motivations of the Fifth Republic and concludes that the opera was preserved essentially for its emblematic value:

> "L'Opéra est-il un instrument de culture, un théâtre commercial, un lieu pour touristes en mal de visites, ou de parade pour souverains étrangers? ... En vérité, la cinquième République, comme l'eût fait un parvenu n'a conservé l'Opéra qu'au titre d'emblème magnifique de son prestige."[233]

Giscard d'Estaing waiting in the wings to succeed de Gaulle, stated this position clearly in *Le Monde* on 17th October 1967:

> "Les subventions aux scènes lyriques sont d'une évident nécessité."[234]

Thus the opera and its traditional audience knew that their order would not be challenged by this conservative successor. Certainly the man who would become President of France in 1974 did not question the utility of state subvention of the Opéra.

In this sense French and British support for the concept of state subvention appear to differ. It is hard to imagine a British head of state making such a candid claim as Giscard d'Estaing without an elaborate justification of its meaning. We have seen however, that this notion of it being a necessity was clearly understood in Britain in 1946 by the Chancellor who was indeed prepared to promise support to Covent Garden, although in less public a manner.

The young Pierre Boulez in an interview in *der Spiegel* in the volatile year 1968 even suggested that opera houses should be blown up as they were emblematic representations of the conservative forces which the student riots were so vigorously rejecting.

> "The most expensive solution would be to blow the opera houses up. But don't you think that would also be the most elegant?"[235]

Boll supports this view and with less emotive language explains the connection between opera and the state describing it as having the possibility of being a political instrument which could be used in the service of the state:

> "L'art lyrique peut-il être un instrument politique au service du régime ou contre l'ordre en place, cela au moment même où l'art dramatique ne concerne plus que quelques centaines de milliers de personnes à coté du cinéma et de la télévision qui en atteignent plusieurs millions? Certainement pas.
>
> Toute forme de spectacle traditionnel est devenue un auxiliaire mineur de l'Etat totalitaire et un faible organe d'opposition en pays capitaliste, même de régime libéral.
>
> Ce qui limite strictement la mission du théâtre lyrique aux seuls problèmes estéthiques et culturels consistant d'une part à en favoriser l'évolution et le renouveau, d'autre part à veiller à sa pérennité en lui assurant une meilleure et plus grande diffusion au profit d'un public de plus en plus accrue."[236]

Thus it is not surprising that the opera house has often been used by rioters in the same way as 19th century assassins were to use it, that is as a potent symbol of state power:

> "In 1968, and on several occasions afterward, the opera houses in Milan, Rome and Paris became symbolic targets of anti-establishment protest demonstrations. A series of violent demonstrations in four Swiss cities was set off in 1980 when thousands of students took to the street in protest against the government's 61 million franc ($35 million) subsidy of the Zurich opera. A Paris Opera premiere I attended in 1986 was delayed for an hour by a cordon of demonstrators blocking the front steps."[237]

This argument is correct but the analysis does not go far enough. Opera will continue because of its fundamental meaning of which the elements he cites form a substantive part. In 1976, the Director of the Paris Opéra perceived opera's rôle as that of being a prestigious state emblem:

> "Le Prestige, le Prestige avant tout.
> Pour M. Liebermann, l'Opéra est '*une institution nationale dans la ville qui est peut-être la capitale de l'Europe*'. Il n'y a donc pas à proprement parler d'Opéra de Paris, mais un Opéra de France, théâtre de prestige, essentiellement pour l'étranger."[238]

His understanding of the rôle of the opera was thus consistent with state thinking on opera since its beginnings. Opera in France yet again would be a venue which would attract foreigners to France, by demonstrating its cultural ascendance.

The Opéra Bastille is an excellent example of the gulf between the political language of democratisation and access and the reality of the meaning of opera. Patureau describes it as "l'aboutissement d'une volonté séculaire de démocratisation de l'opéra."[239] The socialist government of François Mitterrand clearly demonstrates the mixed objectives of politics and cultural

policy. The conception of the Opéra Bastille was marked with all the problems endemic in its double objectives.

Firstly, it was a project to build an opera house, and secondly, a project to reform and create a system of operatic performance.

> "Au cabinet de Lang comme à la mission de coordination, le projet musical ne suscitait pas l'enthousiasme. Seul l'aspect architectural du projet les intéressait véritablement."[240]

A lot of the troubles so frequently commented upon in the polemic surrounding this opera in fact revolve around these incompatible objectives. Government was interested in the first objective and the bureaucrats involved in its original conception had a vested interest in the second. Michèle Audon describes these links between establishment, public administration and the meaning of opera as a matter of fact.

> "Mais on sentait bien que les tenants de Garnier, le lobby des 'deux cents familles' attachées au vieil Opéra, étaient politiquement en position de force. Certains des hauts fonctionnaires de la 'mission Chevrillon' appartenaient sans doute à ces milieux où, depuis plusieur générations, les familles sont abonnées à l'Opéra."[241]

There was also discord in the political language surrounding the Paris Opéra. Mitterrand's new socialist Government had begun a number of major public works to symbolise this new regime. Saint Pulgent demonstrates the continuity of meaning of the Paris Opéra:

> "l'Opéra de Paris, né du bon plaisir d'un monarque absolu, est aujourd'hui encore une institution monarchique et colbertiste, symbole tour à tour admiré et haï de la domination culturelle de notre capitale, et champe de manoeuvre privilégié de la tyrannie bureaucratique."[242]

She identifies the fact that the characteristics of state opera during the Fifth Republic all too distinctly resemble those of Louis XIV's opera:

> "Voilà donc l'opéra placé par Lully dans l'orbe de l'État, auquel il n'échappera plus que pour de brefs intermèdes. Le nouveau privilège dispose significativement que l'Académie de musique, qui prend le qualificatif de royale, est 'composée de tel nombre et qualité de personnes que (Lully) avisera, que le roi choisira et arrêtera sur le rapport du directeur-compositeur': c'est en somme la procédure qui régit la composition des ministères de la Ve République. En outre, les gentilshommes et demoiselles peuvent chanter et danser aux pièces et représentations sans déroger à leurs titres de noblesse ni à leurs privilèges, charges et immunités: on ne saurait mieux marquer l'exceptionnalité du théâtre lyrique dans un temps où les acteurs du théâtre parlé sont frappés d'excommunication."[243]

The notion of what constituted popular opera is open to debate. Saint Pulgent sets out the dichotomy evident in the democratisation of opera once

again stressing that this concept is common to all European cultures with opera and is closely linked to political objectives:

> "Le thème de la démocratisation de l'opéra n'est pas propre à la France et préoccupe, ... tous les gouvernements européens. Mais la forme exacerbée et presque obsessionelle qu'il revêt dans le discours officiel françois, l'emploi très caractéristique et très ancien de l'expression 'opéra populaire', surprenante pour les étrangers, témoignent de la place spécifique que tient ce autre aspect de la 'question de l'opéra' dans notre imaginaire politique.
> Également révélateur est le fait que 'l'opéra populaire' ne se laisse pas aisément définir, surtout quand on lui enjoint en outre d'être 'moderne', mais qu'en revanche il est propre à susciter l'adhésion spontanée de l'opinion. Ce type de discours magique trahit toujours le besoin de compenser une réalité gênante qui n'est ici pas difficile à découvrir: l'Opéra de Paris est depuis toujours et sous tous les régimes le fief de la nomenklatura. Deux siècles de conjuration verbale n'y ont rien changé."[244]

This is amply demonstrated by an examination of the decrees of the President and his Minister of Culture announcing the decision to build an opera house and the published brief to architects. In the Press Statement of 17 January 1983, Jack Lang wrote that:

> "L'actuel opéra ... Avait été conçu pour la société du Second Empire. En optant pour un nouvel édifice, le Gouvernement souhaite à la fois faciliter l'accès de l'opéra au plus grand nombre de spectateurs et l'adapter aux aspirations de la société contemporaine."[245]

The earliest definitions of what this opera house was required to do was to increase audience numbers and provide more reasonable prices in order for more people to participate in the lauding of cultural heritage. Jean-Pierre Agrémy writing under the nom-de-plume of Pierre-Jean Rémy, cultural attaché to Britain in the 1970s and Director of Theatre for the Ministry of Culture early in the 1980s, describes the initial enthusiasm and desire to fulfil these aims juxtaposed against the realities imposed by the art itself:

> "On a commencé par demander la lune, avancé des chiffres prévoyant une 'rentabilisation' financière et sociale de l'Opéra avec une salle de 4 000, voir 5 000 places. Soyons sérieux, tous les responsables d'Opéra interrogés à ce propos sont formels: la capacité d'une salle ne doit pas dépasser 3 000 personnes; mieux, en fait elle devrait demeurer en deça de 2 500 personnes."[246]

and the experienced civil servant, François Bloch-Lainé, who had recently retired from the Ministry of Finance headed the team and saw the dichotomy posed by this terminology:

> "Ce qui importe, c'est de faire en sorte que tous les citoyens puissent accéder à n'importe quelle élite par le goût et l'usage plus que par la fortune et la protection. Parce que cela n'était pas possible au Palais Garnier, il fallait, ou bien construire un nouvel Opéra pouvant, pour un coût à peu près semblable,

> accueillir un nombre sensiblement supérieur de spectateurs, ou bien fermer l'ancien aux opéras, afin qu'il ne tourne pas au scandale social et financier, quelle que soit la bonne volonté de ses responsables."[247]

Soubie emphasizes the importance of political symbolism in the terms in which the creation of a new house was defined:

> "... La Bastille doit être bien moins un temple dédié à un genre qui appartient d'abord aux siècles passés qu'un lieu vivant de culture, de musique et de rencontres comme a sû l'être, dans un autre domaine, le Centre Georges Pompidou."[248]

The following critics, all of whom were involved in the creation of the Opéra Bastille, describe their understanding of the term. Gérard Charlet was an urban planner brought in during the early days of its development:

> "Au fond personne ne savait ce que devait être un nouvel opéra. C'était notre chance, unique!"[249]

He naïvely viewed it as a unique possibility to determine a new meaning.

Bloch-Lainé's rationalisation was that this was a political term reflecting the aspirations of the early 1980s and focused on the experiment of opening opera up to a larger public, openly wondering whether this implied utopian or demagogic principles:

> "Au début, le terme 'populaire' n'était pas trop gênant, il reflétait l'état d'esprit de 1981. Mais son caractère emphatique a ensuite facilité la critique. Il indiquait une intention qui, mal formulée, fut prise pour une idéologie. La véritable question était de savoir si l'ouverture de l'art lyrique a un plus large public avait un sens ou était une concession, soit à l'utopie, soit à la démagogie."[250]

The Anglo-Saxon press were quick to comment on these tendencies and the relationship between France's regal past and 'democratic' present.

> "Of all the Presidents since Charles de Gaulle, the one with the most passion for building and rebuilding, whose architectural schemes most suggest a nostalgia for the imperturbable power expressed by Louis XIV's architects during *le grand siècle*, turns out to be a Socialist: François Mitterrand.
>
> ...
>
> The most troubled Big Project is the Opéra de la Bastille, which everyone hates for different reasons. Its problems go far beyond the disputes over policy and repertoire that led in January to the firing of its artistic director. ...
>
> Right from the beginning, the Bastille was declared a 'modern and popular' opera house, unlike the 'élitist' opera housed in the Palais Garnier's gilded whale of a building. But there has never been a coherent sentence from the Culture Minister Jack Lang and his cohorts as to what popular opera is supposed to be.
>
> It may be Mitterrand's desire to make Paris the opera capital of the world – a recurrent theme of French cultural politics – has landed the city with more opera seats than it can possibly fill. According to a recent survey, opera is the least popular of all cultural activities with the French public. ... Yet in 1989 the state is subsidizing opera to the tune of more than $70 million, of which 85% has been allocated for Paris alone.

> But proportion is not the point. Mitterrand's cultural policies are enmeshed in symbolic spending.
> ... When 21st century students of French politics want to know what his critics meant by the phrase 'presidential monarchy', they will consult, among other evidence, the Big Projects."[251]

In 1994, four years after the previous article *Time Magazine* had not altered its opinion:

> "Like Renaissance Princes, French Presidents since Charles de Gaulle have indulged a taste for monumental architecture to mark their time in power. None rivals François Mitterrand in the pursuit of such *gloire*: in a country where culture and politics are inextricably intertwined, the socialist President has spent more lavishly than any of his predecessors on pharaonic projects, all of which have stirred great controversy.
> None has been attacked so devastatingly as the Opéra Bastille, the 2,700-seat, high tech opera house designed not only to replace the beloved old Palais Garnier but also to fulfil a socialist ideal by bringing opera to the people with more performances at more affordable prices.....
> Most damning of all, the Opéra Bastille has reneged on its basic promise. The cost of the average ticket today is around $100, three times that of admission to, say, the Folies-Bergère, and the number of performances last season never rose above 135, less than half the proclaimed goal."[252]

These works were invested with the connotations of socialist/humanist politics and thus were anathema to the old forces of order. The Opéra Bastille was the last of the big presidential projects to be decided upon and proved to be the most contentious. It suffered from being volleyed between and neglected by both sides of the political spectrum. When the left conceived of building a '*Cité de la Musique*' and eventually a new opera, it wanted to make an architectural and thus cultural statement. The choice of site and date of the opening ceremony decided in 1982 both confirm this. The international competition held for the design of such a building yielded, however, poor fruit and no-one was enamoured with any of the designs submitted for this new building.

The Sunday Times Magazine November 24 1994, *The Phantoms of the Opera* by Charles Bremner:

> "THE BIGGEST INTERNATIONAL competition in history, entered by 1,650 architects, was launched with Mitterrand's order to 'build the biggest and most modern' opera in the world. That formula bore a strong resemblance to Napoleon III's command for the competition won by Charles Garnier in 1860: 'Build the biggest and most beautiful opera in the world.'
> ... seats that, despite a budget running at £59 million a year – four times Covent Garden's – still cost up to £70 a time."[253]

Thus the actual concept of 'an opera' was betrayed from the very first. The cultural minister, Jack Lang and the President hardly disguised their

disappointment and in a sense the project lost the very essence of its meaning as official enthusiasm waned. Saint Pulgent wrote of the realisation that the Opéra Bastille because of its less than visionary design could not rival the Palais Garnier:

> "La médiocrité initiale de son projet n'a donc pu être amendée et l'Opéra Bastille supporte aujourd'hui, en sus de tous ses autres handicaps, la disgrâce d'avoir dû échanger, pour 3 milliards de francs, le carosse de Charles Garnier contre la citrouille de Carlos Ott."[254]

To the old guard the building of a new opera was an attempt to efface a powerful symbolic representation of their order. Proposed by a government which used terms such as power and democracy to describe the new house, the Opéra Bastille was to them nothing more than a very painful thorn in their side. The attempts which they made to stop the project during the cohabitation are very well documented. And it seems that these attempts were not successful only because of in fighting within their own ranks.

> "UNDER THE new regime the opera will move partially back to Garnier for Mozart and other smaller-scale *oeuvres*, while the ballet will pull in the crowds with its golden oldies at the Bastille. The home of all that gold and plush velvet, so reviled by the apostles of *opéra populaire*, is finally undergoing an expensive renovation. The Bastille, with its vast cavern of black, grey and wood, will be left with the Wagner and Verdi and other grand mega-shows."[255]

Thus, the Opéra Bastille became a much unloved building and an acceptable battleground for the right and left of french politics. On the one hand it was to disappoint those who conceived of it initially, yet retain through its site and size, powerful symbols of a leftist political regime and on the other it served to remind the right of a diminution of their power. Thus it was not surprising that each time during a political cohabitation of right and left, projects emerged whereby opera could be returned to the Palais Garnier, for smaller works, leaving the operas with greater mass appeal to the public in the larger, more impersonal hall.

Michael Dittman, one of the early instigators of the project bitterly describes the reluctance with which the Opéra Bastille project was received:

> "Une part importante de l'opposition à l'Opéra Bastille était liée au refus d'abandonner le Palais Garnier, à la nostalgie qu'inspirait l'idée de vouer cette très belle salle chargée d'histoire à d'autres activités que l'opéra.[256]

And Michèle Audon believed that the project had become a pretext from which the right and left of government could vaunt their political standards.

"Ainsi l'Opéra Bastille devenait le prétexte des luttes entre les ministères et les courants du nouveau gouvernement, qui cherchaient à asseoir leurs pouvoirs respectifs."[257]

The project was however realised and the opening of the house bore many more similarities to that of the Palais Garnier than those who created it would have liked to acknowledge. Furthermore in choosing to open the house on the symbolic occasion of the bicentennial of the French Republic they were choosing to invest the house with the dignity, prestige and precepts of the regime. The Opéra Bastille was to be an emblem of the new democratic popular order to which access was a by-word. The dichotomy between the language used to describe the opera and that of its intrinsic meaning was never more evident but Audon asks the question: did the socialist politicians understand what they had asked for?:

"Avec le recul, je trouve que le spectacle du 13 juillet reflétait exactement la situation. Il y avait un apparat plus qu'une fête; une manifestation bien faite, mais sans la joie, ni la création, ni la respiration que l'on avait rêvées pour ce théâtre. C'est bien l'illustration du malentendu autour de cet Opéra. François Mitterrand et Jack Lang ont 'commandé' en 1982 un Opéra moderne et populaire. C'est exactement ce que nous leur avons livré. Mais avaient-ils bien compris ce qu'ils nous commandaient?"[258]

Dittman reflects on the arguments by officials that the opening of the opera could not take place among "popular festivities":

"On nous disait aussi que le 14 juillet était une mauvaise date parce que la place de la Bastille serait envahie par les pétards et le bal populaire. Je reconnais que, justement, le défi était de faire en sorte que l'ouverture de l'opéra soit au centre des festivités populaires."[259]

Audon describes the select invited audience present at the opening:

"Puis vint le soir du 13 juillet. J'étais très détendue. Il était amusant de voir tous ces chefs d'État arriver après que nous les ayons attendus deux heures dans la salle, pour des raisons de sécurité, au milieu du 'Tout-Paris.' ... Le rassemblement des chefs d'État et de la crème du gratin parisien ne correspondait pas exactement au premier public idéal d'un tel Opéra. Malgré tout, je me disais que, puisqu'il en était ainsi, ce public avait l'avantage d'être aussi une caution."[260]

And Saint Pulgent pinpoints the irony that the audience to whom the opera house was opened was far from one which could be described as popular. Not only were there many heads of state but in particular those attending the Annual Summit of the Industrialised Countries.

"Pour célébrer avec éclat le bicentenaire, Jacques Attali l'a fait coïncider avec le sommet annuel des pays industrialisés, qui se tient à Paris à la mi-juillet. Afin de ne pas avoir à sa table que des pays riches, le président de la République a également convié des chefs d'État du tiers monde. Tout cela fait beaucoup de

présidents, de ministres, de diplomates et surtout de policiers. De son côté Jacques Chirac fait savoir que les Parisiens ont droit, comme chaque année, aux bals populaires dont le plus couru est celui de la place de la Bastille. Il y a conflit entre deux cultures populaires: le peuple devra-t-il aller s'ébaubir au 'concert avec des voix' de l'Opéra-Bastille, ou dansera-t-il avec Yvette Horner et son accordéon?

Mais le conflit est purement théorique. La présence de trente-cinq chefs d'États riches et pauvres à l'inauguration exclut bien entendu celle du peuple qui sera représenté, comme à l'inaugruration du Palais Garnier, par un concentré de nomenklaturistes sévèrement dosé. La seule différence est qu'en 1875 les heureux élus avaient payé leur place au prix fort et que la soirée avait procu're au concessionnaire et à l'État un fabuleux profit. Cette fois les spectateurs sont invités aux frais des contribuables."[261]

Some of the left's ambiguity is perhaps demonstrated by the nomination of certain officials in the Bastille saga. Michèle Audon for example was head of a state housing company in Avignon before being transported to Paris for this task. Jean-Pierre Agrémy, writer, former cultural attaché and opera-buff, and an early exponent of the idea was excluded from the team asked to set up the opera, his political allegiances not being exactly in accord with the government of the time. Perhaps the most remarkable appointment of all was that of Pierre Bergé, head of the Yves Saint Laurent empire, home of French fashion and haute couture and in a sense commercial cultural policy, certainly image building, as the head of the opera in 1989. Head of a great business empire and personal friend of the President of the Republic, Bergé was not however experienced in the specificities of running an opera, although he did own and manage a small bijoux theatre which gave emphasis to prestigious lyrical evenings, located not far from the Palais Garnier. Bergé acknowledged that:

"In France everything is political. The Right was always against the Bastille, so when they came back I had to go because I was a friend of the president."[262]

Patronage, privilege and power linked overtly, reminded us of Lully's relationship with Louis XIV at the very beginning of opera's long and chequered history and overt relationship with the interests of the French state. Today no leader can say openly "L'Etat c'est moi", however this message can be disseminated by the symbolic means of opera.

More simply, the first work performed at the Opéra Bastille, like the Sydney Opera House, the re-opening of Covent Garden in 1945, and the Palais Garnier, was not operatic at all. In other words it was an opera house without an opera, but 'opera' nonetheless.

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Chapter 4

The Importance of Opera

The historical section of this thesis demonstrates that opera has been an institution which unfailingly represented the authority of dominant political orders. Opera is and was much supported by those holding power and chastised by those excluded from its walls. However divisive the debate concerning opera, the image of the institution and the house are consistent throughout. This unity is illustrated most literally by the state opera houses. Through the centuries they have displayed their purpose through structural symbolism, by their monumental design, their classical dimensions, the materials used in their construction, the staircases, foyers and discreter spaces of boxes and antechambers, the elaborate ornamentation and rich draperies as well as the colour schemes within them. All these factors have served to communicate and reinforce the meaning of opera to its audience and to society as a whole. The audience indeed would in fact go one step further and mirror the magnificence of the house by the dress and social etiquette developed for the experience of opera-going.

4.1 The Opera House as Monument

"Not so much a theatre as an idea, an attitude of mind"[1] wrote critic Spike Hughes, whilst maintaining that the bombing of La Scala in Milan in 1943 represented only a destruction of bricks and mortar but not however the spirit or essential meaning of the building. Thus, he argued, the damage to the institution was not of great significance, especially as the very process of reconstruction was to serve as a metaphor for the display of renewal of international alliances.[2]

Cultural historian, Andrew Riemer, writing on the post-war reconstruction of the Staatsoper in Vienna also emphasizes that the opera house was rebuilt

with the intention of replicating the old house. He describes an opera house as a temporal monument, likening it to a cathedral in both form and function.

> "Cathedral and opera house were both meticulously rebuilt after the disaster of the Second World War. ... Yet both are restorations, nostalgic reconstructions, not so much of the physical buildings that stood on these sites, as of the dreams and aspirations of a sentimentalised past."[3]

Both Hughes and Riemer focus on the reconstruction of the physical shells of destroyed opera houses, and their comments are of interest notably because they identify theatrical venues denuded of all the essential external trappings of an opera house. Yet, opera houses have clearly been identified by these writers as being at one and the same time a shell of bricks and mortar as well as representing more than that, i.e. the very core of the opera's spirit.

David Littlejohn is certain that their significance is much more than that of a grand building. He suggests that:

> "The re-opening of the bombed out Vienna State Opera ... in 1955 was regarded as the single most important symbol of Austrian recovery."[4]

Donald Horne provides broad definition to the notion of a monument by suggesting that monuments function as symbols of commemoration: be it of "persons, social classes, events, epochs, styles, ideas".[5] Commemoration as such contains elements of the concepts of nostalgia, tradition, ritual, ceremony, previously referred to as stalwarts of the meaning of opera. Horne's interpretation is underlined more specifically by the ancillary terminology which encompasses all those factors of "power" and "prestige".

> "Whether they are relics or newly created, in the uncertainties of the modern age, 'monuments' can acquire a special glamour that gives them a respect not given to ordinary objects. This magical glow can illuminate meanings that justify power or claim prestige. Power continues to have imagination as its servant: over the centuries a single esteemed artifact may serve, in differing ways a number of different social orders."[6]

That opera houses have opened their doors to monarchs, emperors, evolutionary governments, totalitarian regimes, democratically elected governments of the right and left, reflects their applicability to Horne's notion hat they have a "special glamour" and "respect".

The question of what opera houses tell us about themselves, their unction, those who built them, those who use them and those who maintain hem is essential to form an understanding of their meaning. Semioticians and

structuralists such as Umberto Eco, Roland Barthes and Marvin Carlson draw attention to the issue that even the most banal object or construction is never absolutely devoid of meaning.[7]

One can thus say that opera houses are large constructions designed for the presentation of mixed media works and house not only people but associations defined by their spatial configurations and monumental design. These elements and many more constitute an opera house which in turn represents the society which constructed and inhabits them.

Opera houses are plainly not just theatres. They do not look like them although they share the characteristics of stage, foyer and entrance as they are often significantly larger and have grander appurtenances.[8] A good description of one such house is given by the cultural historian James Johnson who describes the colours of the opera house of Paris in the mid-18th century and the social codification of its audience.

> "By the mid-eighteenth century, eighty years of candlelit performances had dulled the theater's original luster, but contemporaries still spoke of its impressive look. The interior was done in greens and golds: the stage curtain was green with gold fringe, the corridor walls white with green trim, and the boxes swathed in green satin embroidered with golden flowers. The decor showed great attention to detail, with each class of seats done up in its own particular style."[9]

The 19th century diarist Chorley described the new drop curtain at the Salle Pelletier, the Paris Opéra, with similar enthusiasm, acknowledging its allegorical significance and aligning it with its intended purpose:

> "The new curtain in the Rue Lepelletier is a grand historical composition, representing none other than Louis Quatorze signing the charter which he granted to Lulli for the establishment of a national opera. ... ponder it well: the device of that curtain is *apropos* to the character as well as to the history of French lyric drama. The monarch is not alone: wits and courtiers are round about him, and the recipient of his bounty is one who was clever in repartee as well as wise in counterpoint."[10]

They are designed for the attraction of a specific audience which behaves in a traditional and codified manner and is reinforced by the appearance of the buildings' structure and decoration. Although all major cities have a theatre district they will only have one grand opera house. So why then, and in what manner, is the opera house different from any other kind of theatre?[11] Why does the design or construction of opera houses command significant government support as has been the case of the Palais Garnier and Opéra Bastille in Paris? Why does their destruction become an affair of singular

national or even international importance as demonstrated in the cases of La Scala and the Staatsoper? And why, when threatened with degradation or neglect, as was the case with post Second World War Covent Garden, should it be of such concern? These factors all contribute to the hypothesis that the opera house represents much more indeed than simply a monumental building having sewn within its very walls a symbolic function in the formulation of the national image.

The operatic venue is invariably designed to invoke feelings of awe. This is remarked upon by many different kinds of commentators. For example, the present Prince of Wales in his foreword to *The Royal Opera House Covent Garden* by Boursnell writes:

> "If you go to an opera or to the ballet you are swept up into the exciting atmosphere of the opera house, engendered by the red and gold surroundings and the feeling of being somewhere rather special."[12]

The importance of the opera house does not apply exclusively to traditional European centres. There are numerous examples of the monumental opera house in non-European cities but significantly and without exception European fashion is the basis for their construction. They serve not only as an arm of cultural imperialism but also as a social control mechanism. Edward Said demonstrates this with a description of the opera house opened in Cairo in 1869. Not only was the house itself designed to represent the quintessence of European culture right down to the landscape surrounding it but it also served to "hold back" the "teeming quarters" of non-European culture. He demonstrates that the opera house stood as a symbol of the occidental world and acted as a bridge to its culture and civilisation in the same manner as the railway station provided a central key to communication and thus commercial interests, which were so much the source of 19th century mercantile interests.

> "The Opera House built by Ismail for Verdi sat right at the centre of the north-south axis, in the middle of a spacious square, facing the European city, which stretched westward to the banks of the Nile. "[13]

This same principle based on the emulation or representation and competition with European culture was also an important factor contributing to the provision of a new Metropolitan opera house in New York in the 1960s. It was an

essential prerequisite that the opera house be as good as, if not better than, its European equivalent:

> "The Metropolitan in November of 1961 was under sentence of death – soon to be demolished and rebuilt, in 1964, elsewhere. Against such demolition there were many arguments based on tradition and sentiment: in its favour were the arguments that it had no storage space for scenery, that externally it was hideous and that some of its interior failed to live up either to the greatness of the city that houses it or to the past in which it glories. The Met, in short, lacked the glitter of La Scala, the grandeur of L'Opéra and the eccentric atmosphere of cabbages and classicism that is Covent Garden's – and amends were to be made.[14]

The Met thus signified not only a venue for opera, but a monument which would symbolise New York's, i.e. the United States' uniqueness and its comparative advantages to Europe. It performed the function of a 'reflection of glories' to be pitted against 'glitter', 'grandness', and 'eccentric atmosphere' and combined with 'classicism'.

It is, however, even more critical in the context of the questions raised in this thesis to interpret why governments today persevere in the maintenance of expensive non-utilitarian monuments, as the current of society has plainly changed in this century towards that of a spirit of economic rationality. Palaces are no longer constructed and are essentially maintained as museums, their function having responded to the ethos of the 20th century.

Opera houses, however, continue to be preserved ostensibly to perform their original function. Even more surprisingly they are still being constructed to enable new European and western influenced states to provide such monumental venues. The construction of the state opera house of Finland opened in 1993 or the opera in Seville inaugurated for the world expo in 1992, are most recent examples of this phenomenon.[15] Moreover opera houses continue to be financed by states even though they require the constant provision of significant revenue from their respective nation's coffers merely for their maintenance or, it would seem, the performance of an art for presentation to a select few.

An investigation focusing on the question of why these monuments appear rarely to resemble each other externally and yet conform to an understood convention, (as spatially they invariably contain the configurations necessary to receive dignitaries, display audiences, etc.), is required in order to answer this evident paradox.

Certainly there is no single comprehensive explanation. In some respects it is the desire to amaze which has created such extravagant monumental fantasies. Thus opera houses were built in a sense to upstage each other to establish themselves not only as the foremost theatre within a nation but the most remarkable theatre in the western world. This is reinforced by the position they hold within urban configurations or morphology. The 18th century San Carlo Theatre in Naples was placed next to Charles III palace and connected to it by private corridors.[16] The Palais Garnier was placed in the centre of the 19th century commercial district in Paris and the 20th century Sydney Opera house crowns that city's harbour. Monuments also have been created traditionally as tools of political design to fulfil spatial and ceremonial requirements of ascendant regimes. The grand staircases, foyers and grand boxes all attest to their function.

The answer can be sought in the very origins of opera, embedded in the renaissance search for antique examples of greatness. These notably contained architectural references which from an early stage were interwoven into the meanings of the houses. Leacroft's study of European theatres complete with designs of the Italian theatre of Sabbioneta, the Farnese theatre in Parma and the Teatro Olympica in Vicenza, well illustrates this.[17] Few were the operas of the 18th and 19th centuries which did not incorporate the traditional pillars, pediments, statues and monumental staircase so associated with the greatness of past eras. These symbols were perceived to be fundamental to the meaning of the house and by some to be more important than the operatic event itself. The staircase of the Palais Garnier was described after its opening to be the hero of the moment:

> "Pourtant, le héros du 5 janvier ne fut pas le maître d'oeuvre, mais son escalier. '*Monument dans le monument*', le grand escalier du nouvel Opéra allait d'emblée acquérir une notoriété qui ne lui sera jamais contestée. Avec les loggias, ses balustrades à mi-hauteur permettant au public s'accouder, avec ses trente mètres d'envolée, ses candélabres, ses riches draperies, ses fausses perspectives dignes de Palladio, l'escalier est à lui seul une composition somptueuse, allégée en deux bras, une invitée irrestible à venir partager les rêves de l'opéra."[18]

thus eloquently emphasizing the real meaning of opera as something far greater than the performed event. It is clearly a social political statement reflected in monumental terminology.

Historically, the civic function of theatres was indeed well established in Greek times. Theatre historian, Marvin Carlson, makes the point that:

> "The public theatres of Greece and Rome were major civic monuments, which held prominent positions in the urban text."[19]

but it is the continuum of their iconographic legacy which is of interest as monumental opera houses displayed their major components as architectural and decorative references linking them with ancient tradition, ritual, power and culture. Andras Kaldor demonstrated this unity with originality in his 1990 exhibition of watercolours of opera house facades where the viewer could see a juxtaposition of pediments, columns, statues, staircases which adorn Europe's major monumental operas.[20] Carlson also comments that when in 1809 Covent Garden was first built it contained the "usual monumental porticos based on the design of Greek temples."[21]

The rôle of opera house and the changing function of spatial configurations within the house, its benefactors and its site within the city are also of significance. Sir Christopher Wren, architect of St. Pauls Cathedral in London, outlined in 1750 the political potential and purpose in the construction of such monumental works:

> "Architecture has its political uses; public buildings being the ornament of a country; it establishes a nation; draws people and commerce; makes the people love their native country, which passion is the original of all great actions in a Commonwealth."[22]

It is the argument of this thesis that this factor remains as true today as it was in the 18th century. The form of great monuments is commonly acknowledged to be a physical manifestation of a building's meaning, especially if the building is designed to house a state institution, so that it is possible for contemporary historians to espouse ideas such as: "Institutions like individuals, must parade and display their glamour if they are to keep their glory alive"[23] as acceptable truths.

A cursory study of the opera houses in Paris gleaned from various historical and contemporary sources well illustrates this point. Jean Gourret, historian of the Paris Opéra comments that opera houses have been traditionally located in distinctive and privileged sections of town:

> "Implanté en des quartiers priviligés, les théâtres de l'Opéra, edifices nobles, comptèrent parmi les embellissements de la cité et ne manquerent pas de

reçevoir tous les soins de leurs maîtres d'oeuvre choisi parmi les plus eminents de leurs temps."[24]

According to Carlson, it was during the 19th century that they reached the pinnacle of emblematic display:

"The new monied classes ... appropriated the opera as their central example of high art, and the monumental opera house became the architectural symbol of 19th century high bourgeois culture."[25]

Roland Barthes emphasized the location of the 19th century theatre also reflected the ethos of 19th century high bourgeois culture by drawing attention to the fact that the district it was constructed in is the centre of "materiality and commerce".[26]

Dominique Patureau firmly reinforces this argument further linking the choice of operatic site to the instructions given to architects participating in the competition to design the new opera house, which clearly was intended to serve as a symbolic structure of the state highlighting the extent to which this monumental opera house is also very much a state political concern following on from similar concerns in previous eras:

"Car le dispositif de l'Opéra est aussi socialisé à l'extrème, au point qu'après avoir été affaire de prince, il est devenu affaire d'Etat. La collectivité en effet, en son expression actuelle suprème, à savoir l'Etat, soutient à bout de bras cette construction culturelle quelque peu construeuses qu'est l'Opéra."[27]

Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent suggests that the very creation of a grand architectural project links together the essential meaning of cultural policy in the state which has historically remained consistent:

"En fait le Grand Projet marie trois éléments distincts: un bâtiment dont l'architecture doit témoigner de la prééminence de la France dans cet art; une institution culturelle également exemplaire et à vocation internationale; et enfin la marque personnel du chef de l'État qui inscrit ainsi dans la pierre, tel Pharaon dans l'Ancienne Égypte, le cartouche de son règne."[28]

In terms of monumental opera houses the meaning is transferred into the social context of the house. Not only is the building situated in areas of topological significance and does it display monumental architectural symbolism but the social significance is also required to emulate these factors. The opening of the Palais Garnier on 5th January 1875 is a good example of this. The following article from a contemporary journal attributes its true significance:

"On se ferait difficilement une idée de l'animation extraordinaire qui a regné toute la soirée. La foule ecombrait toutes les magnifiques dépendences du monument

et l'on entendent sortir de toutes les bouches les cris d'admiration. Décidément, l'Opéra de Paris est une merveille que toute l'Europe viendra voir."[29]

It is demonstrably clear that these varied and eminent commentators have all described something which is more than simply the opening of a building in which to house opera. It was a monument especially designed to show the rest of Europe the strength and domination France could manifest, described in much the same terms as Louis XIV's first *privilège*. The Opéra Bastille, which has been discussed in chapter 3.3 from a political context should also be analyzed in terms of its significance as a monument. It was opened in the highly charged commemorative bicentenary of the French Revolution and was designed with the intention of having a powerful effect of awe on its public both from the monumental aspect of its architectural iconography and also because of the site in the city and the republican connotations which its opening day would commemorate. The irony of the situation was that due to the number of invited heads of state, even the selected invitees were forced to arrive two hours before the event in deference to security arrangements. Agnès Dalbard describes the event bringing together all the weight of historic symbolism which the opening of an opera in a European capital can evoke. What she highlights are the subtle differences in transport, dress, and security and the lengths to which even an invited public in the late 20th century were prepared to go to have participated in the inauguration albeit of a non-operatic event:

"INAUGURER un bâtiment, c'est toujours impressionant, voire émouvant... Alors un opéra?!!! On pense aux gravures avec calèches, crinolines et hauts-de-forme illustrant l'ouverture du Palais-Garnier. Mais, aujourd'hui, pour l'inauguration de l'Opéra Bastille, sur une place quadrillée par d'importants services de sécurité, c'est à pied, en costume de ville et robe courte qu'il faut s'y rendre puisque le quartier est interdit aux voitures et que les sorties du métro sont fermées.

Autres impératifs pour les invités – non officiels –: arriver obligatoirement avant 17h15 (alors que le début du spectacle la Nuit avant le jour n'est qu'à 19 heures), présenter une pièce d'identité avec l'invitations nominative et le billet numéroté, puis passer sous un portique électronique.

Mais que faire pendant deux heures? Lire et relire l'album qui sera remis à chaque invité 'Propos d'opéra. Images de la Bastille', véritable voyage dans les entrailles de ce nouveau temple qu'on est si impatient de voir fonctionner."[30]

The chosen date for the opening of the house was not simply of political significance. Bernard Bovier-Lapierre argues that the debate which ensued over the ultimate location for the new 20th century opera house in Paris was very distinctly politically motivated and the ultimate choice of site reflected the

shift in balance of power between that of the ascendent Third Republic and the first socialist government of the Fifth Republic:

> "Cette tautologie du lieu constitue sans doute la justification ultime du projet. Elle explique sans doute mieux que toute autre raison, la violence de la contestation artistique *et* politique que connut le projet. Alors que la IIIe République naissante avait avalisé et inauguré le Palais-Garnier, enfant d'un régime honi, un simple changement de majorité parlementaire devait poser la question de l'arrêt ou de la poursuite de l'Opéra Bastille."[31]

The hypothesis that the location of the new Opéra Bastille was politically motivated is not disputed by academics, historians, nor those involved in the actual decision-making itself. In 1982, Jean-Pierre Agrémy, 'Directeur du théâtre et des spectacles au ministère de la culture' in the course of a press statement which provided the fundamental reasons for the construction of a new opera house in Paris, provides the following interpretation linking the rôle of opera houses and their socio/political origins to their modern context:

> "Du premier théâtre d'opéra bâti à Florence par les Medicis au coeur même de leur palais, au gigantesque Metropolitan Opera de New York ..., les maisons d'opéra ont connu elles aussi une évolution constante, pour répondre chaque fois aux besoins qui étaient ceux du moment."[32]

and he continues with a justification for the construction of a new opera house in Paris by suggesting that the building itself needs to leave traces of contemporary culture:

> "D'où, et à toutes les époques, la construction de 'nouveaux Opéras' qui sont la marque dans la pierre et le bois de la musique du temps."[33]

and that Paris thus required a new opera to symbolically consolidate the ethos of a new regime:

> "De même que la Scala est le haut lieu du chant italien, Munich le temple de Richard Strauss, le Bolchoï celui de la musique russe, Paris devrait retrouver sa vocation de haut lieu de l'opéra française, des origines à aujourd'hui."[34]

Social engineering and political symbolism finally were critical factors behind the decision to place the new opera house at the place de la Bastille. Rémy does not disguise the fact that topological significance was extremely important in concluding that "la localisation du Nouvel Opéra sur la place de la Bastille n'est pas innocente."[35] This legitimisation of a symbolism of tradition, power and magnificence through the walls of a recognised structure was to physically unite the French socialist dialectic with traditional conservative or classical iconography. It thus reinforced an image and legitimisation of its power base.

> "Si la place de la Bastille a finalement été retenue, c'est peut-être parce que sa valeur symbolique - haut lieu de l'histoire de la Révolution française – trouvait un contrepoint dans une situation géographique toute particulière dans le Paris intra-muros. ... Ainsi l'Opéra jouera-t-il un rôle décisif dans le rééquilibrage culturel vers l'Est non seulement du Paris intra-muros, mais aussi de toutes les banlieues aisément desservies à partir de la Bastille par les transports en commun et les autoroutes."[36]

Carlson also supports the view that the location of the new Opéra Bastille was not a naïve choice:

> "Few theatres of course are to be found in the two 'habitation' zones, though the blue-collar connotations of one of them has resulted in recent years in the project of placing there a new 'people's' opera."[37]

Riemer too comments on the position of this new opera highlighting the language of state jargon and philosophy:

> "Paris's new 'democratic' Opéra de la Bastille, erected with obvious though perhaps unconscious symbolism in the Place de la Bastille, a reminder of the many varieties of absolutism, betrays an equal sense of imposition – the destruction of the mean, the decrepit and the familiar to make room for that grandiose emblem of the republic of *gloire*."[38]

Of course, although the Opéra Bastille is a recent example of the imposition of architectural symbolism through the construction of an opera house, the principle is applicable to most western cultures. Riemer articulates this point bringing together the political, religious and historical elements:

> "Opera houses are placed at the focal points of those cities of Europe where dreams of political power were expressed as celebrations of art. The more absolutist the régime, the more prominence these secular shrines tend to occupy. Garnier's pompous edifice in Paris dominates a conjunction of boulevards and streets; even now, more than a century after its construction, one is aware that streets, houses and ways of life were obliterated to make room for this statement about the grandeur not so much of France, as of Napoleon III's vision of a France ruled by an Emperor, the autocrat in a frock-coat."[39]

Again in the context of urban placement one witnesses the remarkable consensus of commentators concerning the importance opera's extra-musical meanings.

Location is only one important element which designates the meaning of opera houses. The act of going to the opera is associated with visiting and entering the buildings. Michel Rosaint clearly explains that the phrase 'I am going to hear an opera this evening' actually does not mean that the person is going to hear an operatic work but will be attending a performance at an opera house:

> "Si quelqu'un dit encore aujourd'hui: 'Je vais entendre un opéra ce soir', chacun comprend qu'il va à l'Opéra, – au Palais Garnier ou dans un des 15 grands

> opéras que comptent les régions françaises. Comme si aller au théâtre était forcement aller à la Comédie-Française ou au Théâtre municipal."[40]

Catherine Clémant evokes the sentiments which going to the monumental opera house, the Palais Garnier stir in her. It is an entire mise-en-scène:

> "A great house, a strange one, in the heart of the city. Nightfall, going to the opera... By day it is a gigantic edifice, decorated with columns and statues, useless. ... At night, it comes to life. The house with its Greek pediment – the temple for music – begins to quiver. ... The brilliance of all the chandeliers is visible through the tall windows."[41]

The religious aspect of public monuments was well understood by Charles Garnier. Théophile Gautier described the Palais Garnier as being the "cathédrale mondaine de la civilisation".[42] Garnier harnessed these connotations and mingled them with other symbols of his age. He described his aims in the design of the Palais Garnier thus:

> "A theatre 'should have the character of a theatre, as a church has that of a church ... the details as well as the whole should be related to the purpose of the monument' and this involves 'not only teaching, but also luxury and pleasure.'"[43]

Indeed this double aim was achieved. Not only did it have the character of a church and resemble ecclesiastical architecture of the period which was also constructed for political reasons i.e. the Sacré Coeur church in Montmartre built after the suppression of the 1871 commune, but it also incorporated the forceful imagery of 'Palace' into its title.

Monuments traditionally have been designed to represent spiritual and temporal powers. They have served as temporal evocations of religious symbolism which is evidenced largely by their capacity to provide a structure of consequent dimensions and grandiose allegory which in turn is used to imitate much of the ritual of religious congregation. Monuments did not only fulfil civic functions but were also designed to evoke the ecclesiastical symbolism of a temple. What better monument than a theatre in which to act out the ritualistic performance of rites, accompanied with the paraphernalia of ceremonies swelled with chant, percussion, draperies and procession? Riemer firmly equates the two in this detailed description:

> "Vienna's churches echo with memories of the opera. Even the interiors of venerable gothic piles underwent thorough modernisation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to transform them into God's theatres. The churches constructed in that epoch are often indistinguishable from the court theatres of the age. The Karlskirche ... reveals its essentially theatrical design from the moment you set foot inside the porch. It is a miniature foyer – your eyes scan its wall and corners in search of the cloakroom and buffet. The church itself is

> embellished with every variety of coloured, veined and patterned marble. The high altar is displayed behind an ample proscenium arch, its curtain raised to reveal a stunning spectacle of marble, gold and bronze. The organ gallery, protected by an elaborately carved balustrade, occupies the position of a royal box."[44]

Riemer's opinion is not simply idiosyncratic. Opera houses are often equated to temples both in form and because of the nature of event which they house. Ava Hubble suggests that:

> "The Opera House is often deceptive, but its reality is a building of monumental proportions easily rivalling the medieval cathedrals and temples of antiquity."[45]

Catherine Clémant suggests that the relationship between the spectator and the monument is important as it can serve in effect as a scenario for an imaginary world signifying the internal symbolism of each individual. It:

> "transform[s] the spectator into a character participating in a comedy. And he participates not only as a decorative extra but as an actor caught up in an identification for which he has paid."[46]

One can pose the question inversely and ask: when is an opera house not an opera house? In *The Times of* 4 January 1808, the following description of the refurbishment of The King's Theatre in 1807 reveals the significance of a grand opera house which plainly, according to the author fails to fulfil certain requisites:

> "The interior of the Theatre has been newly painted and decorated. The general appearance is light and airy; but it has not the imposing grandeur which seems to become a building devoted to the heroic opera, the most pompous of all scenic exhibitions."[47]

Other kinds of venue in which opera is performed may fail to become opera houses. A recent example of this is a performance of Carmen at the Palais des Sports, a large convention hall in Paris:

> "Carmen au *Palais des Sports* – ou le degré zéro de l'opéra populaire ... Mépris absolue du public."[48]

or the following remark about the associations connected with the Volksoper in Vienna:

> "The Volksoper is a dull-looking building near a clattering and clanging tramway viaduct. It is, as its name suggests, a theatre for the masses."[49]

The New Zealand soprano, Frances Alda, describing her experience at the Metropolitan Opera House at the beginning of the century vividly illustrates the image which an Opera House should provide:

> "At first sight of the Metropolitan Opera House, I gasped. Then I laughed. *That* an opera house?
> It looked more like a storage warehouse. Dirty brown brick. Shabby. ...
> I remembered the stately Opéra in Paris; the dignity of La Scala – a palace dedicated to music and as noble as the palazzo of any Visconti in Milan. I thought of the magnificent opera house in Buenos Aires where I had sung that summer..."[50]

Thus for opera houses to take on their absolute meaning they must represent a particular idea, tradition, inherited iconography, audience and political construct.

We turn here to descriptions of opera houses in order to test what they have meant to commentators. In the 18th century much stress was placed on the grandness of the house, allegorical architectural references and decorations. The opera house reflected the order of the outside world and society and civilisation and therefore depended on reflection of these notions at aristocratic venues. At the beginning of the century Raguenet compares the magnificence of Italian opera houses to the French. He emphasizes their historic significance by comparison with the monumental qualities of the buildings of ancient Rome as being an important factor in his assessment:

> "To conclude all, the Italian decorations and machines are much better than ours; their boxes are more magnificent; the opening of the stage higher and more capacious; our painting, compared to theirs, is no better than daubing; you'll find among their decorations, statues of marble and alabaster that may vie with the most celebrated antiques in Rome; palaces, colonnades, galleries, and sketches of architecture, superior in grandeur to all the buildings of the world."[51]

Burney, later in the century, places stress on the location of the opera house noting the classical references in the building and commenting on the magnificence of the opera house in Berlin in terms of its architecture and morphology:

> "From hence we went to the great opera house; this theatre is insulated in a large square, in which there are more magnificent buildings than ever I saw, at one glance, in any city of Europe. It was constructed by his present majesty soon after his coming to the crown. The principal front has two entrances; one level with the ground, and the other by a grand double escalier; this front is decorated with six corinthian pillars, with their entablature entire, supporting a pediment ornamented with reliefs, and with this inscription on it *Fri clericus Rex, Apollini et Musis*. This front is decorated with a considerable number of statues of poets, and dramatic actors, which are placed in niches. The two sides are constructed in the same manner, except that there are a number of pillars."[52]

It was not only in Berlin that the special qualities of the building determined status. Voltaire said that possession of a box at the opera could be seen as an arbiter of civilization:

"[The French] completely recovered from their ancient barbarism until the archbishop of Paris, the chancellor, and the president each possessed their own boxes at the opera."[53]

The Earl of Mount Edgcumbe provides the following account of The Kings' Theatre in the Haymarket in the 1780s in which he lays emphasis on the architectural innovations provided for the requirements of its aristocratic audience who in turn dressed to complement its spectacle:

"Both of these (pit and boxes) were filled exclusively with the highest classes of Society, all, without exception, in the full dress then universally worn. The audiences thus assembled were considered as indisputably presenting a finer spectacle than any other theatre in Europe, and absolutely astonished the foreign performers to whom such a sight was entirely new. At the end of the performance the company of the pit and boxes repaired to the coffee room, which was then the best assembly in London, private ones being rarely given on opera nights and all the first society was regularly to be seen there. Over the front box was the five shilling gallery, then resorted to by respectable persons not in full dress: and above that an upper gallery encircled by private boxes, yet still the prices remained the same, and the pit preserved its respectability and even grandeur till the old house was burnt down in 1789."[54]

This notion of grandeur is further reinforced by Lalande who, comments on the boxes at La Scala and according to Strunk "gives us an interesting account of this house":

"'The boxes,' he says 'were large and comfortable for people who pass a quarter of their life in them are naturally careful to furnish them agreeably.' There was a restaurant and there one could have warmed up one's dishes (presumably brought from home when one wished to sup in one's box); in which one was waited on by the staff of servants. But boxes could not, like those of Venice, be closed off from the theatre by a shutter. The archeduke's box had attached to it a private sitting room and even a bedroom. The performances were extremely splendid, the enormous stage sometimes being occupied by 400 persons and 40 horses."[55]

Indeed it is an insightful description as Lalande places emphasis on the ceremony of restoration and segregation of Italy's aristocracy with its taste for the spectacular and 'splendid' on its stage.

Burney's emphasis on the meaning of opera house is consistent. In his later voyage to Belgium he comments on the Brussels theatre that:

"I have only to add, that it is lofty and noble; but, though constructed after the Italian model it is far inferior in size to most of the theatres in Italy. The Scenes and Decorations were rich, ingenious and elegant."[56]

The theatre's elegance and seating configurations figure largely in his appreciation of the house:

"The theatre in this city is one of the most elegant I ever saw on this side of the Alps; it is constructed in the Italian manner, there are 5 rows of boxes, 19 in each, which, severally, contain six persons in front. There are seats in the pit,

> 5 or 6 of which are railed off for the accommodation of strangers, who, otherwise, would be in danger of obtaining no good places, as the boxes are usually let to subscribers and there are no galleries."[57]

Thus in the 18th century it can be seen from these selected examples that size, site, architecture, decoration, spatial requirements and social significance were undeniably perceived to be essential elements of an opera house. The commentators were drawn to comment as much on these factors as any discussion of performance. La Scala of the early 19th century continued to entrance visitors. The young Stendhal rapturously wrote:

> "Impossible même d'imaginer rien de plus grand, de plus magnifique, de plus imposant, de plus neuf que tout ce qui est architecture."[58]

He was also extremely impressed with the San Carlo Theatre of Naples as the following description of the gala re-opening in honour of the King's birthday on 12 January 1817 shows:

> "Standing once more in the theatre, I found again that sense of awe and ecstasy. If you search the furthest frontiers of Europe, you will find nothing to rival it – what am I saying? Nothing to give so much as the vaguest notion of its significance. This mighty edifice, rebuilt in the space of 300 days, is nothing less than a coup d'état: it binds the people in fealty and homage to their sovereign far more effectively than any constitution ...."[59]

and of La Fenice in Venice he associates political power and fortune with the opera house's significance, concluding that tradition and monument are a source of political legitimation.[60]

Stendhal also comments on the significance and various functions of boxes at La Scala at the beginning of the 19th century:

> "Une femme en Italie est toujours dans sa loge avec cinq ou six personnes; c'est un salon dans lequel elle reçoit, et où ses amis se présentent dès qu'ils la voient arriver avec son amant."[61]

He highlights the uses of boxes in other parts of the theatre by distinguishing the social reasons for attendance from the musical:

> "Le théâtre de la Scala peut contenir trois mille cinq cents spectateurs placés fort à leur aise; il a autant que je puis m'en souvenir, deux cent vingt loges, où l'on peut être trois sur le devant; mais, excepté les jours de première représentation, l'on n'y voit jamais que deux personnes, le cavalier *servente* et la dame qu'il conduit, le reste de la loge ou petit salon peut contenir neuf à dix personnes, qui se renouvellent toute la soirée. On fait silence aux premières représentations; et, aux suivantes, seulement quand on arrive aux beaux morceaux. Les gens qui veulent entendre tout l'opéra vont chercher place au parterre..."[62]

The opera house did however contain many of the traditional associations between grand opera, ceremony, royalty and tradition. This comment published in *The Times* of 1803 well demonstrates these associations:

> "The boxes belonging to the ROYAL FAMILY are all lined with scarlet drapery. The ceiling exhibits a beautiful mythological painting of Aurora in the centre, and full length figures are ranged around in illuminated compartments, which contribute to the elegant air of the whole theatre."[63]

Ranking and comparison of theatres was not only reserved for foreign travellers like Burney or Stendhal. In his *London Guide of 1879*, Charles Dickens Jnr. referred to Covent Garden in this context:

> "One of the largest theatres in Europe, ranking next after San Carlo in Naples, the Scala in Milan, and the Rigola in Florence."[64]

The opera houses of Paris, had long been consciously designed to reflect the glories of their ascendant powers. Jean Gourret, historian of the Paris Opéra, states unequivocally that "l'Opéra de Paris a toujours été aussi un de hauts lieux de la politique de prestige de la nation."[65] *The Cambridge Modern History* suggests that it was clearly political design which was the major motivation for the design of such buildings under Napoleon III:

> "In part, his motive was political, for the broadening of the boulevards made it difficult to erect barricades across them, and this provided a safeguard against popular insurrections such as had overthrown Charles X and Louis-Philippe. But the intention was also to embellish the city and to furnish facilities commensurate with its growing size. Two of the architectural monuments of this rebuilding of Paris – the huge canopied shelter for les Halles, ... and the new Opéra, begun in 1813 though not completed until 1875 – were later imitated in numerous other cities, both in Europe and America."[66]

and the celebrated architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner further reinforces this notion by highlighting how the monument settles into the politically defined cityscape:

> "The most refined example of Neo-Baroque is to be found at Paris in the Opéra by Charles Garnier (1825-98) begun in 1861.
> A great deal of the external effect of the Opéra depends on its position at the intersection of several of the new boulevards and avenues of Paris. These new, long, wide, straight, tree-planted thoroughfares are the most famous contribution of our period to town-planning. They are bold, very logical and very impressive – wholly in the absolutist traditions of the Paris of Louis XIV, and indeed due to the absolutism of Napoleon III and his Prefect of the Seine Department Baron Haussman (1809-91)."[67]

Towards the end of the 19th century the traditional notions of an opera house were challenged by the form of the Festival Theatre at Bayreuth. Significantly, however, the meaning of the house still called upon references

from ancient Greece and the theatre itself continued to serve an establishment audience searching for a new relationship to myth and ceremony:

> "Wagner broke the conventions of opera both spiritually and physically. The Festival Theatre at Bayreuth, built to his specifications and embodying his ideals, has none of the social gradations of theatres like this one in Vienna. Its rows of seats rise without interruption from the first row to the last: there is no gallery, no boxes, apart from a couple of discreetly placed private recesses which were reserved for his family in the original design. The justification for this in the rhetoric of nineteenth-century cultural politics was the example of ancient Greece, where the design of the great amphitheatres ... did not establish social distinctions between various groups within the audience by erecting physical barriers. Gone too were the elaborate decorations in gold, marble, plush and paint that contrived to turn many of the opera theatres of the 'old' Europe into jewelled cases to display the audience as much as the spectacle on stage."[68]

In the new worlds such spatial revolutions were to take place rather more slowly. The importance ascribed to the splendour of the house was very much to prevail and serve to promote the interests of the newly ascendant order.

The 20th century inherited many assumptions about the nature of the opera house and had to integrate them before being able to impose its new language on the buildings. Thomas Beecham recounts in his memoirs that he conceded upon advice, to perform his opera season in a house which bore the meaning of opera to its audience in its very walls and thus was more likely to ensure an audience than the simple presentation of a work in a theatre devoid of traditional operatic associations:

> "...and perhaps my ultimate goal would prove to be a building of smaller dimensions than Covent Garden or La Scala ... . But as my advisers were strongly of the opinion that this my first important season should be given at Covent Garden, a theatre that had been associated in the public mind with opera for over two hundred years, there I went."[69]

Certain elements which were more important to regimes of the past have also been jettisoned and are often lamented. The re-opening of Covent Garden after the Second World War was described as a matter of national pride, but the disappearance of some traditional symbols was not unnoticed.

> "Now the new management has restored the beautiful auditorium almost to its old splendour, the boxes have shrunk to a mere dozen or so on one tier only;..."[70]

Furthermore the adornments which reflected the importance of the house were to disappear as social codes changed:

> "The last years before 1939 still retained something of the air of the normal Royal Opera House. There were boxes with subscriber's names on the door and a white tie was indispensable."[71]

Hermann Klein, chronicler of the great age of Covent Garden in the latter 19th century reflects sadly upon the 'drab aspect' of the post-war house:

> "At that period of the Victorian age Covent Garden did not wear the same drab aspect as it does today."[72]

and yet it is argued that the house has managed amongst these adversities to retain its meaning, even though its recent history was far from unchequered and its traditionally select spaces were receding as were other privileges in post-war Britain. The writer concludes however that:

> "The first German War turned Covent Garden into a furniture repository; the second turned it into a dance hall. ... Today it is still the Royal Opera House but showing many changes from the place we knew in 1939. Performances start at 7 p.m. as they do in Central Europe; evening dress is not obligatory in Europe's oldest kingdom and as it is in its youngest republic, and there is a bare working minimum of boxes."[73]

It is apparent that whatever its fortunes, the theatre must continue to signify to the public that it means the best in national terms:

> "Covent Garden has somehow kept its peculiar atmosphere, its air of being the world's greatest musical market – and its attraction, for all who live in that strange, exciting world of opera, as the theatre above all others in which an artist most appreciates success."[74]

It must also, as a requisite of this function, represent consistency with the political language of the time. Thus in post-war Britain, so affected by rationing and cosseted frugality, the opera house too effected changes which resembled the rest of the society. The image of the house, however is not diminished. The carpet remains red and gilt is still to be seen and thus the institution's meaning is unquestioned and intact:

> "The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, stands in the middle of a vegetable market and has a carpet in the foyer. These may appear trivial distinctions to attribute to one of the most famous opera houses in the world, but in fact they are both symbolical and characteristic of England's principal lyric theatre.
> ... At Covent Garden the carpet not only keeps your feet warm, but it is an unwitting symbol of this ancient institution's whole position in musical history. The carpet is red; red carpets are traditionally put out for distinguished guests, and Covent Garden's function throughout its hundred odd years as an opera house has been largely that of playing the part of host to the best the rest of the world has to offer. It has perhaps for that reason always had a peculiarly cosy and unmistakable English atmosphere about it... There is gilt among the crimson and there are pretty shaded lights in clusters along the parapets where the boxes ought to be ... partitions, like the best silver, have been stored away for the special occasion, which, it must be admitted seems more than usually far away. That is unless, as one fears, the best silver has been pawned in order to raise the rent."[75]

In fact the vegetable market so associated with the 19th and early 20th century image of Covent Garden was preceded in this rôle as being the grandest, most fashionable and most raffish square in London. Its grandeur and its posh brothels attracted clientele to the area and established it as a venue of entertainment for the aristocracy and upper middle classes.[76]

The view that there is a certain quirky originality to English tradition, and thus England's opera house, is also maintained by many writers. Riemer, for example, suggests that:

> "Only in London, a city always suspicious of its sovereigns' claims of absolutism, is the opera house tucked away in a sidestreet near what was until very recently a vegetable market."[77]

Forsyth's language is more politically oriented and his viewpoint of the rôle of the opera, the house and its associations in 1911, or roughly the same time as Beecham's first Grand Opera series were being presented, is largely cynical. To him, if the opera house is to fully declare its meaning it needs undeniably to make a statement of its nationhood as well as of its own importance:

> "Both the orchid-house and the tiger-house - like the Royal Italian Opera - are interesting and expensive curiosities... The charge against it is not that its record is not grand and glorious, but that it has achieved a record in which we have no part and from which we can draw as a nation neither present benefit nor hope for the future. ... Its sympathies and its feeling are not for the nation, but for the smallest and least productive section of the nation and for the foreigner. Its password is fashion; its hall-mark, alienage; its sign-manual, the diamond tiara ..."[78]

Most importantly Forsyth identifies the opera as a place accessible only to a privileged few. This notion of exclusivity is to permeate language on the nature of opera in all its aspects. Forsyth is evidently an opponent of the hierarchy of social order which frequents the house but equally the same terms are used by other commentators to commend the house.

The French critic Ibanez was disappointed by the appearance of Covent Garden. He clearly expected that as in the French tradition, its walls would display and thus signify grandness, tradition and brilliance. His undisguised surprise at not finding these factors, so important to a Frenchman's comprehension of the meaning of opera, is resoundingly expressed in a tone of admonition:

> "Aussi, quelle surprise pour moi de découvrir, le 7 juillet 1979, l'architecture exterieure du Royal Opera House, Covent Garden: pale replique inanimée d'un

temple romain surélevé. Sur un piedestal massif, percé de trois portes à peine plus grandes que celles d'un immeuble ordinaire, repose un colonnade dont le néo-classicisme à fait se fanner les feuilles d'acanthe. Le tout surmonté d'un fronton sans aucune surprise. Le rythme de l'ensemble fait pret-à-porter....

Le hall d'entrée ne signale en rien ce temple de la musique: pas une muse sculptée, aucune allégorie d'Erato où de Terpsichore. La grâce seule de quelques colonnes galbées d'un blanc crème à l'anglaise. Nul escalier monumental, unique, ou fatalement, comme sur une voie publique, tous se rencontrent... Ici, tout le monde est avec tout le monde."[79]

Covent Garden has also been defined in a context of political comparison by English critics, its unique characteristics somehow taking on the quirkiness of the British image:

"What Covent Garden Market is in the vegetable world the Royal Opera House has been in the animal or operatic world.

... In its time, however, the Royal Opera House has occupied a position on the international scene of opera without parallel. Because it is an English theatre it has somehow managed to keep an open mind and almost without exception the favourite operas of Italian, French, German and Austrian audiences have been staged at Covent Garden."[80]

Moreover as an institution it is attributed to having values which reflect the fabric of British financial and social history.

"For all that the history of Covent Garden opera has been one of bankruptcies and, to coin a euphemism, financial uncertainty, of social brilliance and abysmal depression, there is no doubt that in the course of it the theatre can point to a record which for catholicity of taste, variety and breadth of repertoire, has never been surpassed by any other theatre in the world."[81]

However many references to the Victorian world of Covent Garden seemed to be dismantled, there were even in the late 1960s many remaining architectural definitions which allowed audience segregation to occur. The *Covent Garden Plan, Royal Opera House Report* of January 1968 highlights some of these:

"Attention is drawn to the 'preposterous' situation whereby patrons of the stalls and gallery are not allowed to mix, even during the intervals; to the inadequate refreshment facilities; and to the complete inadequacy of parking space."[82]

In the same year however, the radical French composer Pierre Boulez railed against the traditional meaning and function of the opera house in his much cited interview in *Der Spiegel*:

"In the provincial town of Paris the museum is very badly looked after. The Paris Opéra is full of dust and crap, to put it plainly. The tourists still go there because you 'have to have seen' the Paris Opéra. It's on the itinerary, just like the Folies-Bergère or the Invalides, where Napoléon's tomb is."[83]

Boulez was in fact suggesting a redefinition of the opera house, expressing a wish to attribute to it connotations of a modern, more radical age. Ironically,

he was one of the principal architects in the construction of the Opéra Bastille, an opera house which has proved to be unswervingly traditional in form and conception although steeped in the logic of a revolutionary leftist politique.

Peter Hayworth's comments in the same year as Boulez's seem to attest to the opposite opinion as he argues that opera houses are so popular that they are growing in size:

> "After the French and Industrial revolutions, the numbers of opera goers were swollen by the rising middle classes, and that is reflected in the growing size of opera houses."[84]

In the recent past Byron Belt, Music Editor of Newhouse Newspapers introduced Sir John Tooley, General Director, Royal Opera Covent Garden with the following remarks,

> "Those of us who are fortunate enough to travel in the world of opera, probably always have a special thrill when we sit at the Royal Opera at Covent Garden. For me, seeing those magnificent red curtains with ERII as they part is a moment of special magic."[85]

What in fact he clearly expressed to a Symposium of International Opera House Managers on 1 November 1985 was the mystique of the house, equating to it tradition, ceremony and monarchy unique in his mind to England and very firmly placed in the monument, not the art. This is supported by Russell Braddon:

> "The Théatre de l'Opéra is the masterpiece of the famous architect, Charles Garnier. Externally majestic, its interior is palatial. A foyer of marble is enhanced by candelabras and sweeping balustrades. The auditorium consists of orchestra stalls, flanked by three vertical tiers of boxes and, above them, a gallery. The ceiling is domed and crawls with angels and cherubs; it is supported by four double columns from above which well-bosomed, trumpet blowing angels gaze down benignly. A massive chandelier hangs from the centre of this celestial dome. Everything in the auditorium that is not gilt is crimson – and nothing has been left unadorned."[86]

and although the Opéra Bastille contains none of the obvious architectural reinforcement of the traditional symbolic meaning of the house, its political connotations clearly rise above the purely architectural:

> "If the dreams of its planners are realised, this new monument should become the architectural symbol of Mitterrand's socialist era as the Garnier Opera was of the second Empire."[87]

and internally the audience spaces were devised to:

> "...conduire le public jusqu'à l'intérieur de l'Opéra par glissements progressifs: façade ouverte, déambulation, information, bibliothèques, cafeterias, vidéo, ouverture acceuillante, et la salle enfin."[88]

Finally, in Rémy's dream opera, the audience, having worked its way through these spaces, perhaps exhausted arrives at the auditorium itself and awaits the presentation of the musical work.

When the Bolshoi ballet visited London in May 1993 they brought with them as a stage setting the interior of their theatre. This is interesting in the context of this chapter as it was not a reproduction of the proscenium or what an audience would normally be viewing but in fact that of the 'hind view', the tsar's box and auditorium, thus serving to reconstruct the significant social spatial configurations of the house.

> "An opulent 70ft-long 125ft-wide tableau, reproducing the interior of the company's theatre in Moscow, has been hung... It blocks off half the hall, turning an auditorium into a theatre.
> The magnificence of the tsar's box in the proscenium arch has been simulated in reds and golds. Crimson drapes hang alongside glittering pillars..."[89]

It is in the United States that the architecture and spatial connotations and traditions associated with opera houses have most often been tampered with to accommodate the ascendancy of new classes. In the 1890s Edith Wharton pointed out that the old house simply had to be changed to compete with the grand European operas and accommodate its new audiences:

> "Though there was already talk of the erection, in remote metropolitan distances 'above the Forties,' of a new opera house which should compete in costliness and splendour with those of the great European capitals, the world of fashion was still content to reassemble every winter in the shabby red and gold boxes of the sociable old Academy. Conservatives cherished it for being small and inconvenient, and thus keeping out the 'new people' whom New York was beginning to dread and yet be drawn to;"[90]

Yet here we see that in the 1960s the same argument is used once again in a period when Covent Garden, the Palais Garnier, La Scala and the Staatsoper had remained either intact, or were rebuilt or modified upon their 19th century plans.

It would seem that whatever concessions the United States make towards European standards, there will always be a critic who will suggest that the Met does not quite live up to the splendour of traditional opera houses:

> "Vilaine salle du Met: trop grande et des courants d'air conditionné. Les erreurs à éviter. On rêve du coude à coude de Bayreuth: voilà la vraie communion de la musique! Ici, un désert surpeuplé. Horreur des couleurs, des lumières; comment faire 'moderne' dans une maison d'Opéra moderne?"[91]

The final question in terms of opera houses is an open one. That is, what will future opera houses look like? If they serve the purpose of providing

a monumental endorsement of state power, it might seem that they will always be extremely grand and luxurious buildings incorporating traditionally understood elements of staircases, large foyers, and reception areas. The polemic surrounding the choice of colour for the seating fabric in the newly constructed Opéra Bastille has already been cited and well illustrates the importance of such objects towards the creation of a language reflecting the meaning of the opera house which is valid for today and yet reflects its history and tradition. Saint Pulgent argues that the construction of a new and modern opera at the Bastille had as its premise a break with old order, much in the way that the choice of location seated the house in a non traditional area:

> "En bref un opéra moderne ne peut avoir des fauteuils rouges déjà vus ailleurs, ce serait une contradiction dans les termes."[92]

Furthermore the person who made this delicate choice was none other than François Mitterrand, socialist President of the Republic. Michèle Audon describes how this decision was arrived at:

> "Comme à son habitude, François Mitterrand demanda l'avis des diverses personnes présentes. Lorsque ce fut mon tour, j'ai expliqué que c'était la première fois que l'on essayait d'affirmer avec cohérence la modernité d'une salle d'opéra. Le bleu foncé me paraissait assez beau et ferait bien ressortir le granit gris des murs mais, selon moi, il faillait ne pas craindre d'affirmer, comme le souhaitait Carlos Ott, le choix du noir, de la même façon que les théâtres du XIXe siècle avait affirmé le choix du rouge. 'C'est juste, dit le président, le noir est une vraie couleur. Ce sera, noir.'"[93]

Thus advised by his counsellors on the symbolism inherent in the choice of colour and the concepts of modernity, Mitterrand, decisively, if not regally, pronounced his choice.

Pierre-Jean Rémy suggests that perhaps if a new form of opera becomes acceptable, then a new form of temple will be created to house its god:

> "Dans vingt ans, si une nouvelle forme de musique est créée – mais qui ne soit pas forcément opéra – on pourra penser alors à lui construire son temple. Mais ce serait une monumentale erreur que de construire d'abord le temple et de chercher ensuite le dieu à y adorer."[94]

This however, would seem unlikely, given that the operatic temple is constructed more to impart an image of the state which finances it, than as an adulation of the art in isolation.

4.2 Going to the Opera

The way people behave at the opera and the notions which they hold about 'opera going' is an important element of the opera experience. William Weber observes that "When we enter an opera house today, we feel that we must abide by certain social and cultural assumptions..."[95] It is these "cultural assumptions" translated into behavioural codes which have travelled freely across national boundaries and remained consistent throughout opera's history. Raymond Williams suggests that the "systems of social signals" define the organisation of the arts.[96] Such systems are the way social and cultural assumptions are put into behavioural practice. With these concepts in mind, the audience in attendance at the opera and the varied facets of its activities there will now be considered.

The question - why do people 'go to the opera' - will be investigated in this section. We have already seen examples from dictionaries that such a thing as an "opera frame of mind" is recognised.[97] To demonstrate its point this chapter provides detailed accounts of the experience of opera-going by critics and audiences. Display and recognition are important factors. The significance of seeing and being seen is a vital key to understanding the meaning of opera across all centuries and all cultures. Opera traditionally has opened its doors to a select few taking on the rôle of a venue for display of major cultural achievements in other countries. Those allowed entrance as well as those excluded also define its meaning. Those who go to the opera in the most part belong to groups of the powerful, wealthy or famous. Those who do not still maintain and express firm views about the nature of the experience. Furthermore by fulfilling its function as a monumental house of display for the nation, international patrons are expected to marvel at the affluence and sophistication on display at the opera. Early opera travellers such as Stendhal and Burney attest to this in accounts of their experiences in many different European opera houses in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

The following examples have been chosen in order to demonstrate that the act of 'going to the opera' has been viewed largely for its social significance rather than musical importance by many writers throughout the history of opera attendance in different countries. Indeed there is a remarkable consensus of opinion expressed by very different commentators

from the 18th century in both England and France. The early 18th century critic and would-be librettist Addison appears convinced that interest in and attendance at the Italian opera was based more on a fashion for foreign novelty than interest in the opera itself:

> "At present, our Notions of Musick are so very uncertain, that we do not know what it is we like; only, in general, we are transported with any thing that is not English."[98]

Thus his notion of going to the opera was associated with a social class which delighted in sophisticated symbols imported from foreign cultures. The actor-manager Colley Cibber commenting upon the varied fortunes of the Italian opera in London at the beginning of the 18th century remarks on the nature of the audience, suggesting that the chief asset of operatic performance was that it brought together the "Body of Nobility" in a "Prodigality of Expence".[99]

Later in the century Lord Chesterfield observed that going to the opera had clearly become an important social requisite. Fashion dictated attendance rather than the pleasures of the performance itself. He comments that:

> "If art had any intellectual or spiritual value, there was nothing to the 'man of fashion' who attended the opera or listened to other music for no more pleasant relaxation and because his position in society demanded that he attend."[100]

Lord Mount Edgcumbe describes the dress and behaviour of society at the opera which very much define the nature of the experience as one of exclusivity and fashion:

> "Both of these (public and private boxes) were filled exclusively with the highest classes of society, all without exception, in the full dress then universally worn. The audiences thus assembled were considered as indisputably presenting a finer spectacle than any other theatre in Europe."[101]

Indeed Dr Johnson, never slow to scathingly describe social mores believed that going to the opera was a highly fashionable activity undertaken by those of a certain select section of society:

> "Of the ladies that sparkle at a musical performance, a very small number has any quick sensibility of harmonious sounds. But every one that goes has her pleasure. She has the pleasure of wearing fine clothes, and of showing them, of outshining those whom she suspects to envy her; she has the pleasure of appearing among other ladies in a place whither the race of meaner mortals seldom intrudes, and of reflecting that, in the conversations mentioned among those that sat in the first row; she has the pleasure of returning courtesies, or rejecting them with disdain. She has the pleasure of meeting some of her acquaintance, of guessing why the rest are absent, and of telling them that she saw the opera, on pretence of inquiring why they would miss it. She has the pleasure of being supposed to be pleased with a refined amusement, and of hoping to be numbered among the vortresses of harmony. She has the pleasure

> of escaping for two hours the superiority of a sister, or the control of a husband; and from all these pleasures she concludes that heavenly music is the balm of life."[102]

The consensus of views concerning opera in the 18th century were not exclusively the domain of English critics. Voltaire too expounded a very similar sentiment when he stated like Johnson that it is a place in which to see or be seen and where the work itself is "rather boring", thus of secondary importance:

> "L'Opéra n'est qu'un rendez-vous public où l'on s'assemble à de certaines jours sans savoir pourquoy: C'est une maison où tout le monde va, quoy qu'on dise mal du maître et qu'il soit ennuyeux."[103]

He goes on to lament that whether the performance or work are of questionable quality does not stop the audience choosing to frequent it rather than theatrical performances:

> "Il faut au contraire bien des efforts pour attirer le monde à la comédie, et je vois presque toujours que le plus grand succes d'une bonne tragédie n'aproche pas celoy d'un opéra mediocre."[104]

Rousseau, who like Addison also dabbled as a librettist, is more scathing, describing it as "the meeting house of opulence and laziness".[105]

In England the notion of meeting house was equally important especially as its poor weather makes meeting out-of-doors a rarity. New amenities were constantly being designed to please the audience and maintain its position as a venue affording the quintessence of fashion. The *Morning Chronicle* of 1797 describes the opera house in London in the following terms:

> "A new Foyer for the Gallery was opened, to which there are also passages from the Pit and Boxes. As the Opera is the rendezvous of all that is gay and pleasurable in the Metropolis, this Coffee Room will be an admirable resort for a lounge, and may be the means of reducing Fop's alley, as well as the Stage, from half their nocturnal tenants. It is certain that, in this more remote haunt, the elegant Beau may indulge in his promenade with less interruption to the Audience, and fashionable *badinage* may be reconciled with decorum."[106]

The facilities the opera house afforded again were held to be of great importance.

It would seem that fashion also determined cost. The more desirable attendance at the opera became, the more marketable the tickets, which in turn elevated prices. The *Monthly Mirror* of November 1796 comments on the phenomenon.

> "The avidity of the fashionable world to obtain boxes, and the solicitations for that purpose, in consequence of the arrangements, almost surpass belief. A

> gentleman, who two years since, purchased a box for a certain term at the price of two thousand guineas, has sold it within these few weeks, for £2,500, after being in the enjoyment of his possessions for two complete seasons."[107]

This view of opera was commonly shared. Fashion commanded the difference between the normal theatrical experience and that of the opera. The authoritative historian of The King's Theatre, Nalbach asserts that:

> "The price of opera admissions, almost four times higher than that of the playhouses, resulted in the King's Theatre catering to an audience 'where fashion, and not feeling, bears the sway, Whilst sense and nature coyly keep away'."[108]

Money was not the only arbiter of attendance. The emphasis on the quality of dress, an obvious social indicator, as a way of distinguishing who could reasonably attend the opera in the 18th century was a common element of European opera attendance. Burney comments that in Berlin:

> "The king being at the whole expense of this opera; the entrance is gratis, so that anyone who is decently dressed may have admission to the pit."[109]

and describes a scene based on formalised ceremony, hierarchy and behaviour. Indeed, Burney likens it to a military parade:

> "The performance of the opera begins at 6 o'clock: the king, with the princes and his attendants, are placed in the pit close to the orchestra, the queen, the princesses and other ladies of distinction, sit in the front boxes. Her majesty is saluted at her entrance into the theatre, and at her departure thence by two bands of trumpets and kettle drums, placed one each side of the house, in the upper row of boxes.
> The king always stands behind the maestro di capella, in sight of the score which he frequently looks at, and indeed performs the part of director-general here, as much as of generalising in the field."[110]

Burney's expectations of music and opera in Naples exceeded those of other cities. His comments on the San Carlo opera house combine the fundamental elements of opera, the building, the audience and the magnificence of the spectacle and well demonstrate that the performance yet again was the criteria of least importance in this extremely prestigious theatre:

> "But to return to the theatre of S. Carlo, which, as a spectacle, surpasses all that poetry or romance have painted: yet with all this, it must be owned that the magnitude of the building and noise of the audience are such, that neither the voices or instruments can be heard distinctly. I was told, however, that on account of the King and Queen being present, the people were much less noisy than on common nights. There was not a hand moved by way of applause during the whole representation..."[111]

The cultural historian David Johnson writing on the 18th century in France asserts that "To attend the opera in the middle of the century was to

see social power displayed."[112] Another cultural historian, John Dizikies also provides an explanation for the continuity of views on opera in the 18th and 19th centuries:

> "Attending the opera, like speaking French, was one of the things the governing class shared as Europeans, in the face of the hostile nationalisms, religions, and rivalries which distracted and divided them."[113]

Attendance at the opera at the beginning of the 19th century represented a continuum based on dress codes and class identification as commented upon in J.F. Reichardt's travel observations:

> "In London, an ordinary citizen does not venture into the parterre of the great Italian opera – the drama of the nobility and the great rich world – without having at least marked himself as an elegant and wealthy gentleman by some outward sign – a fine expensive ring, or something of the sort."[114]

Social signals yet again define the experience. Nalbach points out that attendance at the opera was a visible social requisite as one's name had to appear on the box ownership plan even if the expense meant that the purchaser had to forgo attending the actual performance. In this sense the operatic experience occurs right outside the walls of the house.

> "Each year the management printed a Plan of the Boxes to the King's Theatre which listed the proprietors of the boxes for the season. This served almost as a Social Register, for some members of the nobility who were embarrassed financially purchased a box for the season to keep up social appearances, but disposed of every performance at a loss."[115]

Tickets were only made available to those with certain social connections. According to Reichardt it was difficult to obtain entrance even if the appropriate clothing could be found:

> "(an ordinary citizen) can in no way obtain admission to a concert or any other sort of entertainment offered by subscription to the nobility – the Concerts of Ancient Musick, for example – unless he is at least related to the great noble families."[116]

John Ebers, Manager of The King's Theatre between 1821-1827 gives a detailed account of that theatre's re-opening and its social and political importance.

> "That the re-opening of the theatre might be under the most favourable auspices, it was though very desirable, if possible, to produce his Majesty's avowed patronage. ... His Majesty was pleased not only to grant his sanction, but, I believe, to express his satisfaction at the measures which had been adopted. ... A good deal however, remained to be done before the doors could be opened to the public. The house was repainted, the dingy red in which the audience part had hitherto been clothed, being abolished, and replaced by a light blue ground. Ornaments after approved designs were adopted, and the appearance of the house rendered lighter and more classical." [117]

Finally, all his efforts culminated in a visit to the opera by the King:

> "On the 4th night of performance, March 20th, the King signified his pleasure to attend to Opera (it being his first visit since his accession to the throne) every preparation was made suitable to the event. The ante-room, and the box selected by his Majesty, were hung with satin, and ornamented with festoons of gold lace."[118]

Writing in 1822, Ebers stresses the importance of regal endorsement and the kind of audience which it brought with it:

> "The effects of the royal visit to the Opera this season were shown more powerfully even than in the last, by the over-crowded audience assembled."[119]

The audience drawn to the opera were very much going to it for its social context and this was deliberately maintained to include as well as exclude certain members of society. Ebers was quite clear about this policy:

> "There can be no doubt, that if the box-tickets were excluded from the pit, the society in the pit would be very different; instead of all the men of fashion meeting there, the company would be such as frequent the pits of other theatres; in consequence of which, the price would necessarily be lowered. One of the agréments of the King's Theatre is the certainty every one has of meeting his friends from all parts of the world. It is the resort equally of the lovers of music, the dance, and of those who care little for either, but who like to meet each other, and feast their eyes by gazing on the most beautiful as well as the best drest women resident in this country."[120]

The view that opera's main function was one of social presentation was accepted and derided by Hunt in the *Companion* on 30 January 1838.

> "...people come as much to be seen as to see - the performers in the boxes prepare for disputing attention with those on the stage; - men lounge about the allies, looking so very easy, that they are evidently full of constraint; the looks of the women dispute one another's pretension; ... in short, you feel that the great majority of the persons around you have come to the Opera because it *is the Opera, and not from any real love of music and the graces.*"[121]

Erlich draws our attention to John Hullah, a mid-century inspector of music, who created the national system of music examinations in Britain, and paraphrases his view that:

> "People of rank attended the opera, but that was 'a social affair, which has little to do with music itself.'"[122]

The audience in the 18th century had been restricted (in the pit and boxes at least) to a limited circle. But the Industrial Revolution widened the circle of wealth, and many watched in bewilderment as the old order gave way to the new. The 19th century English opera historian, George Hogarth expressed a similar view to that of Voltaire:

> "The public, too, had begun to grow weary of an entertainment the character and beauties of which were, as yet, but little understood in England, and which had been supported exclusively by the aristocracy, more for the sake of fashion than for any real taste for Italian music drama."[123]

Writing on the audience at Her Majesty's Theatre in London in the mid-19th century, theatre manager Lumley commented that:

> "Nevertheless, the audience at Her Majesty's was considered to represent the very best society, both those who belonged by birth and those who by recently acquired wealth were newly admitted to the ranks of gentler circles. No one was admitted to the pit or boxes who was not in full dress, that is, frock-coats, coloured trousers, etc., were not admissible."[124]

Gruneisen laments however that in fact since the introduction of railroads the tone of the opera audience has noticeably been lowered:

> "The cessation of the exclusive reign of fashion over opera dates from the introduction and extension of the railroad system. True, what is called 'The Season' remains, ... but there is now a miscellaneous public, native and foreign which during this brief period forms the audiences of the opera house, quite independently of the regular subscribers, who, by the way, favour in these days, the stalls infinitely more than the private boxes."[125]

What he is in fact describing is the slow march towards the democratic enfranchisement of society where access to culture would be seen as an inalienable right and society would broaden to make room for a new wealthy mercantile class. Rank and dress defined the context in which the audience could participate in the full meaning of the event. Charles Dickens Jnr. explains to his readers the requisite dress codes for entrance: "During the Italian season full evening dress is de rigeur in every part of the theatre except the gallery"[126] and this was taken to such a degree that in the 1840s comments such as the following were not uncommon:

> "Thanks to the caprice of fashion, ladies no longer dare to come and display those feathered headdresses with which the boxes were filled formerly and which, with a shake of the head of the proud wearers, told the less favoured mortals, 'You see, we go to court'."[127]

A writer to *The Musical Times* in 1867 eloquently describes to what degree an individual wishing to attend a performance was made to feel out of place at the opera as if musical satisfaction was the least of its functions:

> "The poor music-lover knows and feels that he is admitted on sufferance. He is received at the door by soldiers with fixed bayonets, who look fiercely at him, but still graciously permit him to pass.
> Having purchased a ticket and arrived at the house, he must stand at the doors for three-quarters of an hour before they open, rush in with the crowd, and either tumble into a seat (perhaps without a back to it), or stand the whole evening a martyr to his love of art."[128]

Some saw this formality as a positive element of the theatre, as the monumental exterior was reflected in the dress and tone of the house, giving it a unique ceremonial visage:

> "It was approached as at present from the Bow Street vestibule, where a couple of scarlet-coated sentries furnished by a company of Her Majesty's Brigade Guards, marched solemnly up and down in full-dress uniform during every representation. For Covent Garden was not an ordinary theatre licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, but was provided with a Royal Charter that entitled it to military protection."[129]

George Bernard Shaw militated in his own unique style for a separation between these two seemingly incompatible rôles of social and musical experience at the late 19th century opera house. He complained that: "I have to sit in our vulgar diamond-show at Covent Garden"[130] and offered as a solution that a distinction should occur in the form of separate houses so that what he felt were two divergent reasons for 'going to the opera' could be expressed.

> "...what we want is separate opera houses for elementary and advanced musicians, with a supplementary one for the display of diamonds constructed so as to allow the public to promenade down the middle, in the style of the Burlington Arcade."[131]

Hermann Klein, critic and contemporary of George Bernard Shaw perceived dress, pomp and ceremony with pleasure, deeming them as much a part of the opera itself as the musical performance. Describing his first night at the opera, his clothing is of equal importance to the event itself:

> "I was destined to listen the performance of Don Giovanni, ... Happily I had just been promoted to the dignity of an evening dress suit."[132]

This interest in presentation was to Klein an integral part of the opera event who describes the experience with a different tone but a similar perception to that of Samuel Johnson a century before:

> "I could fully appreciate the rare elegance of the ladies gowns, the profusion and beauty of their glittering jewels, and the glint of their gorgeous tiaras..."[133]

So too was the overall splendid appearance of the house of importance to him. The opera experience very clearly embodied display of wealth and social signs:

> "At that period of the Victorian age Covent Garden did not wear the same drab aspect as it does today. As high up as the amphitheatre stalls ever tier contained ... only private boxes. The 'pit' was available to the public when there was room, but not otherwise, evening dress being 'indispensable'."[134]

Not only was it important for a house to look good and its audience to be dressed in the conventionally accepted standards of the day but attendance at the opera by heads of state produced a most splendid effect. Mapleson commented that:

> "In 1864 my season opened brilliantly, and on the fifth night I induced Garibaldi, who was then in this country, to visit the theatre; which filled it to overflowing."[135]

and in 1871 brilliance was again assured him as:

> "I opened my London season of 1871 (Drury Lane) under brilliant auspices, the Prince of Wales having taken a box as well as all the leading supporters from the old house. ... I returned to London to take up my autumn season afterwards at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden..."[136]

This audience described by Klein contained the élite of the land: it was at opera that they congregated and he was in no doubt as to their reasons for doing so:

> "Thus the whole attraction of the opera house as a centre of social intercourse for the highest folk in the land concentrated in and around the auditorium."[137]

However society can be fickle and if it finds amusement elsewhere can on occasion renege upon its interests and commitments. This according to Klein, was the case in 1884 when the Royal Italian Opera collapsed and he suggests that:

> "the only real explanation is that society had begun to lose interest in the opera as a social function..."[138]

It was also during the 19th century that the gala performance in honour of foreign dignitaries was first initiated providing to society and the opera house mutually beneficial results as well as affecting singers normally immune to conventional adulation:

> "During this season, early in the month of July, it was intimated to me that His Majesty the Shah of Persia would honour the theatre with his presence. ... Mdme. Nilsson had ordered, at considerable expense, one of the most sumptuous dresses I have ever seen, from Worth, in Paris, in order to portray "Violetta" in the most appropriate style. On the evening of the performance His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales arrived punctually at half-past eight to assist in receiving the Shah, who did not put in an appearance; and it was ten minutes to nine when Sir Michael Costa led off the opera. I shall never forget the look the fair Swede cast upon the empty royal box, and it was not until half-past nine, when the act of *La Favorita* had commenced, that His Majesty arrived."[139]

In France it has already been noted that the 19th century was one of great political upheaval. No fewer than five opera houses took on the name

of national opera, each grander and more fashionable than its predecessor and opera gradually became the bastion of the upper middle class which strengthened during the century as well as that of the traditional aristocracy.

There is little argument that the Paris Opéra of the 19th century functioned as a mirror of bourgeois society. Dr Véron, the extremely successful manager of the Opéra in the 1830s remarked that the Opéra held the same connotations for the bourgeois republic and reflected the political spirit of his day as succinctly as Versailles represented the jewel in the crown for France under Louis XIV. Beavert and Parmty concur with Véron's analysis:

> "Le 19 siècle marque l'avenement définitif d'une bourgeoisie opiniâtre qui fait de l'opéra le miroir de son ascension. ...l'arrivée comme la sortie des spectateurs donnent lieu à un ballet mondain qui permit de vérifier la position de chacun sur l'échelle sociale.
> C'est un monde qui se donne en spectacle."[140]

Furthermore Véron explains how in his grand opera house the importance of having a box at the opera was ascendant over, and distinct from, the significance of the performance itself:

> "Un locataire à l'année, dans une lettre qu'il m'addressa, se plaignait à moi d'avoir, tous ses jours de loge, à peu près le même spectacle; je lui repondis que l'administration s'offrait à lui rembourser la somme qu'il avait payée, s'il voulait bien renoncer à sa location. Il s'empresse de m'écrire qu'il tenait beaucoup à sa loge, qu'il voulait la garder, et que ses observations ne contenaient aucune reproche." [141]

and goes on to describe the success of his 1832 season attributing this to its being "à la mode" rather than for any musical or artistic reason:

> "L'automne de 1831 et l'hiver de l'année 1832 furent très brillants pour l'Opéra; on se disputait toutes les loges ... l'Opéra était à la mode... Rien ne réussit comme le succès."[142]

The opera was the quintessential fashion accessory to a certain element of French society in the 19th century. Even the activities pursued prior to arriving there took on a certain rarefied code. One such fad is described:

> "La soirée peut commencer par une flânerie sur les boulevards: vers 1830 certains dandys très branchés aimaient y promener des tortues."[143]

The traditional old orders and dandies constituted only a part of the audience as the industrialists came of age. Sainte Beuve writing in 1849 explains that it is more likely to be at the opera than at the stock exchange that Parisian society is best represented:

> "L'Opéra répresente la civilisation parisienne à ses grands jours, dans sa pompe et dans ses fêtes. Après chanque ébranlement social, voulez-vous avoir la

mesure de la confiance renaissante ? Voulez-vous savoir si le monde rend à la vie, si la société se remet à flot et rentre à pleines voiles dans ses élégances et ses largesses ? Ce n'est pas tant à la Bourse qu'il faut aller, c'est peut-être à l'orchèstre de l'Opéra."[144]

Michel Leiris reflecting in the mid-20th century appears to regret what to him should be and was during the 19th century, the essence of going to the opera:

"Au XIX siècle – qu'on peut tenir pour le 'grand siècle' de l'opéra – alors que l'opéra était vraiment une fête puisque les hommes y allaient en tenue de soirée et les femmes en robe décolletée, l'éroticisme n'avait sans doute pas besoin d'être présente sur la scène, puisqu'il était dans la salle.. "[145]

Barbier reaffirms this view of opera and its audience in the 1820s describing it as a pagan temple of elegance, fashion and luxury, music however is not mentioned:

"Temple de la danse, temple des intrigues et des amours secrètes qui s'ébauchent dans le fond des loges, l'opéra est aussi le haut lieu de l'élégance. On ne saurait y venir sans être habillé à la toute dernière mode; une soirée de spectacle, au début du siècle, tient de la présentation de mode: diadèmes et perles, fourrures et châles de cachemire cotoient des plumes longues et flexibles 'en saules pleureurs', et des robes jaune turc, ou gros jaune, les seules qui produisent de l'effet, dit-on, à la lumière des bougies. Quant aux hommes, plus classiques, ils assistent au spectacle en pantalon clair, manteau cintré, gilet de soie, de satin ou de velours, chemise à ruches et grosse cravate à carreaux, sans oublier ces deux accessoires indispensables que sont le haut de forme et la canne à pommeau d'or ou d'ivoire."[146]

and E. de Jouy is absolutely clear about the reasons for attending the opera. His critique is very similar to that of Samuel Johnson's:

"Ce qu'on aime le plus à l'Opéra, ce n'est pas la musique. Les femmes vont à l'opéra pour être vues, les hommes pour voir..."[147]

It was the construction and opening of the Palais Garnier in Paris in 1875 which created the most characteristic of all operatic experiences. The building was monumental, a temple designed to deify culture, the decorations grandiose, the foyers and staircases (which incidently and significantly took up more space within the structure than the auditorium) set off the distinguished audience attired in its most brilliant regalia and representing national and international figureheads as well as representatives of the long since deposed French aristocracy and the grand bourgeoisie. The building complete, the event deemed a success, no actual opera was performed on the night.

"Cette soirée solenelle a été un eblouissement. Un public d'illustration, une salle resplendissante de diamants, les foyers, les couloirs, les escaliers entincelants de lumière; des princes; des généraux; des ministres, aux loges, des célébrités a tous les étages; les femmes les plus belles, les plus distinguées de Paris, ajoutant le plus gracieux ornement à ce palais féérique qui semblait fait pour elles; le roi Alphonse XII d'Espagne et la reine Isabelle en face du Lord-maire,

le président de la république et Madame la marechale Mac Mahon occupaient la grande avant-scène de gauche, le lord-maire et sa société la loge contigue. On a remarqué aussi le comte et la comtesse de Paris, le duc de Chartres, les ministres de la guerre et de l'instruction publique. La reine Isabelle était dans une loge du côté droit en compagnie du jeune roi Alphonse. La reine s'est longtemps promenée au foyer au bras du roi. On se ferait difficilement une idée de l'animation extraordinaire qui a regné pendant toute la soirée. La foule encombriait toutes les magnifiques dépendences du monument et l'on entendait sortir de toutes les bouches des cris d'admiration. Decidement l'Opéra de Paris est une merveille que toute l'Europe viendra voir."[148]

Patureau remarks that in the new Paris Opéra, like those preceding it, dress was the single most delineating factor within the audience as the popular audience distinguished themselves from the abonnés wearing 'tenue de ville' rather than evening dress:

"Mais c'est surtout le costume qui est le plus abondamment commenté dans le but de faire la preuve manifesté des differences existant entre le public des populaires et celui des abonnées 'alors que les lundis, mercredis et vendredis traditionnels, ...Le reste du costume se différencie également des toilettes habituelles de representations payants, car le public des populaires vient, lui a l'Opéra 'en redingote', ...'(en) jaquette', '(en) tenue de ville'."[149]

And Klein commenting on the première of *Romeo and Juliette* at the Palais Garnier on 28 November 1988 notes the audience's rank and the clothes and jewellery worn:

"Many a time I have looked upon the heavily gilded and slightly sombre interior of the Paris Opera-house, but never when it contained such an audience, such a gathering of famous men, of elegant, jewel-bedecked women, as appeared there on that memorable night. The *grandes dames* of the French aristocracy were present, displaying a sartorial splendour that recalled the halcyon days of the 2nd Empire, and what that implied I can only leave my fair readers to guess."[150]

In the fictional domain of literature the notion of opera going is reinforced and Edith Wharton draws a graceful analogy between going to the opera and a society wedding in *The Age of Innocence*:

"'How like a first night at the opera!' he thought, recognising all the same faces in the same boxes (no pews), and wondering if, when the Last Trump sounded Mrs Selfridge Merry would be there with the same towering ostrich feathers in her bonnet, and Mrs Beaufort with the same diamond earrings and the same smile - and whether suitable proscenium seats were already prepared for them in another world."[151]

George Bernard Shaw commenting on opera going at Bayreuth launches his criticism of the audience with their dress codes:

"The little promenade in front of the theatre is crowded with globe-trotters, chiefly American and vagabond English, quite able to hold their own in point of vulgarity, frivolity, idle curiosity, and other perfectly harmless characteristics with the crowd in the foyer at Covent Garden or the Paris Opera. ...Inside, the 'honourable ladies'

> are requested by placard to remove their towering headgear; and not one of them is sufficiently impressed with the really religious surroundings to do so."[152]

The themes which recur in the 18th and 19th centuries remain the same in the 20th: tradition, dress and the occupation of the new élite in response to the new philosophies of the day. The beginning of the 20th century in England was still very closely linked to the spirit of the previous one. Britons looked back on the 19th century with considerable contentment. For example, the journal *The Nineteenth Century* continued to be published in London until well into the twentieth, without anybody suggesting it might be right to change the title. Society was however changing slowly and comfort and convenience were beginning to be the new arbiters of taste. Shaw, representing the tastes and prejudices of a new growing middle class, challenged the excesses of opera-going ritual and clothing though accepting that costume had its function:

> "The Opera management at Covent Garden regulates the dress of its male patrons. When is it going to do the same to the women?
> On Saturday night I went to the Opera. I wore the costume imposed on me by the regulations of the house. I fully recognize the advantage of those regulations. Evening dress is cheap, simple, durable, prevents rivalry and extravagance on the part of male leaders of fashion, annihilates call distinctions, and gives men who are poor and doubtful of their social position (that is, the great majority of men) a sense of security and satisfaction that no clothes of their own choosing could confer, besides saving a whole sex the trouble of considering what they should wear to state occasions.[153]

Henry James suggested that going to the opera in New York was the quintessence of fashion and his description of the practices vividly evokes the schisms of rapidly changing worlds, juxtaposing images of tiaras with those of subways and tall buildings:

> "...the general extravagant insistence on the Opera, which plays its part as the great vessel of social salvation, the comprehensive substitute for all other conceivable vessels; the *whole* social consciousness thus clambering into it, under stress, as the whole community crams into the other public receptacles, the desperate cars of the Subway or the vast elevators of the tall buildings. The Opera, indeed, as New York enjoys it, one promptly perceives, is worthy, musically and picturesquely, of its immense function; the effect of it is splendid, but one has none the less the oddest sense of hearing it, as an institution, groan and creak, positively almost split and crack, with the extra weight thrown upon it – the weight that in worlds otherwise arranged is artfully scattered, distributed over all the ground. In default of a court-function our ladies of the tiaras and court-trains might have gone on to the opera-function, these occasions offering the only approach to the implication of the tiara known, so to speak, to the American law. .."[154]

Alda's memoirs provide an extremely thorough insight into the opera-going codes of American society at the turn of the century, highlighting the fact that

the performance on the stage was but a secondary meaning of the opera experience. Her remarks concerning the rights to hold boxes, devoid of any social comment, reveal the accepted traditional social structures of the day. The opera house claimed the same territory as private clubs in the Anglo-Saxon world of restricting membership to those who it deemed to be part of their privileged group:

> "It (the Met) had been built by and for the new rich of the late seventies and eighties, for whom the Academy of Music, at Fourteenth Street and Irving Place, which had succeeded the opera house in Astor Place and which was the resort of old Knickerbocker New York, was not adequate. The Astors, Vanderbilts, Goelets, Drexels, Mortons, Iselins, Warrens, and Havens who had figured prominently among the first directors and box-holders still swayed destinies and determined the policies of the company.
>
> No Jew was permitted to own a box. Mr Otto Kahn, the President of the Board, subscribed to seats in the orchestra.
>
> That season of my début was the first season that Mrs Astor's box, Number Seven, was not occupied by society's Queen Dowager. She had died that year. I never witnessed what I was told was the usual procedure on Monday nights. It had been Mrs Astor's custom to arrive at the opera at exactly nine o'clock. And this no matter at what hour the curtain rose. As what she did was copied slavishly by the rest of society, it developed that the opera's first act was sung to a house more than empty.
>
> As nine o'clock drew near, there would be the swish and rustle of silk trains, the tramp of feet coming down the orchestra aisles, the scrape of chairs being moved to better positions in the boxes.
>
> Interest in happenings on the stage dwindled. Opera glasses were raised and focused on the curtains of Box Seven.
>
> Nine o'clock.
>
> A hand parted the curtains.
>
> Mrs Astor came in and took her seat.
>
> An audible sigh of satisfaction passed through the house. The prestige of Monday Night was secure. Only, then, was the attention of all but the ardent music-lovers in the audience turned to the singers and orchestra."[155]

Saint Pulgent describes an inverted relationship to dress at the opera in Paris during the First World War as the public was expected to renounce its fashion habits in deference to the political situation of the times:

> "Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, aller à l'opéra sera un 'signe de solidarité' avec les poilus, pourvu seulement que le public renonce aux grandes toilette: le gouvernement annonce que les contrevenants qui arboreraient vison et habit seront refoulés à l'entrée..."[156]

Sometimes it would appear that importance of fashion was momentarily nconvenienced by the vagaries of operatic production:

> "The first performance at Covent Garden for over 100 years of Rossini's La Cenerentola ... was put off at the last moment last night.
> ...The reason for the cancellation of what had promised to be the most fashionable and successful evening of the season was the illness of the leading tenor".[157]

Anticipation of going to the opera for the first time is well described by Harold Rosenthal who, like Klein some years before, was impressed and won over to the art by the attire of the audience and the marvel which the scene engendered:

> "I climbed the steps to the amphitheatre and entered the magic world of the Royal Opera House for the first time.... in the 1930s, the amphitheatre stalls, was the only part of the house other than the gallery, which in those days was separated from the amphitheatre, in which full evening dress was not de rigeur. The sight below me of stalls and boxes filled with men in white tie and tails and ladies in splendid evening dresses, many wearing long white gloves, and tiaras, and to me looking like people from another world (even the programme sellers, mostly men, were attired in tail coats), made an indelible impression on me."[158]

The importance of dress was often used to distinguish an opera audience from other musical audiences. Sir Thomas Wood lamented that in his audience for symphony concerts "comparatively few people take the trouble to wear evening dress. Yet everyone wears it at the opera..."[159] He also acknowledges that it is the 'social element' which determines attendance at the opera.

> "It is useless to deny the fact that the social element rules attendance at the opera and elsewhere. If patrons can be as sure of meeting their friends at the concerts - as at the opera, I am certain our symphony concerts, etcetera, would regain a lost audience."[160]

This is a startling admission for one so firmly convinced of the usefulness of musical performance that the reasons for attendance are firmly other than musical.

Programmes and advertising are also a good indication of dress standards. This excerpt is a highly illustrative example of operatic advertising. It would appear that the central purpose of the advertised Gala performances is to welcome members of the World Economic Conference. As an added draw, the Queen, members of the Royal family, and the Prime Minister dutifully act as bait. It is understood that formal dress is *de rigeur*, but it is equally interesting that as this event is to emulate a state occasion, medals also are to be worn. Perhaps most significant of all is the position where the actual programme is displayed, overleaf and extraneous to the central event.

> "The Camargo Ballet Society - by arrangement with the government hospitality committee and by courtesy of the Covent Garden Opera syndicate (1930) Ltd. presents 2 Gala Performances of Ballet at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden on Tuesday June 27 and Thursday June 29 at 9.15 p.m. in honour of the World Economic Conference, when the principal delegates of the Assembled Powers will be present as guests of the Society.
> Her Majesty the Queen has signified her intention of attending the performance on June 27 accompanied by other members of the Royal Family.

The Prime Minister will be present at the performance on June 29th. Decorations will be worn."[161]

The re-opening of Covent Garden after the war, when it had been used as a dance hall, was to mark a turning point in language about the house. Writers wistfully would retreat into their memories of the 'old house'. What they meant by this was the dress people wore and the lavishness of the appurtenances. By saving the house from vulgar usage, Britain retrieved a powerful symbol of tradition and grandeur. Randolph Churchill describes the re-opening as:

"a marking event in Britain's tardy post-war revival. In my grandmother's Edwardian days the Opera House admittedly presented as brilliant a spectacle as could be found in Europe – two tiers of boxes running all round it, replete with beauty and fashion. The women wore tiaras, the men white kid gloves, while on the stage were all the most famous cosmopolitan singers, who were supposed to appear there for lower fees than in some other capitals because, for some reason which can hardly have been purely artistic, they looked on the applause of London as the surest seal on their reputations. And in the last year before the first Great War, Covent Garden entertained the glorious Russian ballet of Diaghilev, of which those who are old enough to remember it still say (though perhaps with better reason), as Wordsworth said of the French Revolution, 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive'.

The change and decay set in. Milton tells us how best things get perverted 'to worse abuse, or to their meanest use', but no doubt the quotation is too severe, for Covent Garden never became anything worse than a *palais de danse*. Still, it was a come-down. Now the new management has restored the beautiful auditorium almost to its old splendour – not quite, for though the gold and crimson have returned, the boxes have shrunk to a mere dozen or so on one tier only; and though the audience, headed by the King and Queen and the Prime Minister, contained figures of every known form of distinction, they were not on the whole much to look at; for nowadays nobody has any clothes worthy of the name. It was an 'austerity' opening."[162]

Not once in this mournful reminiscence does he describe the performance. Indeed, great events at the opera house were determined often more by who was in attendance and what the honour of the occasion was, than the performance itself. Naturally the post-war opening of the opera house (to a performance of ballet, not opera) required ordination from the highest orders n the land. *The Times* of course did not fail to cover the importance of this event in its social pages and editorial:

"The King and Queen, Princess Elizabeth and Princess Mary were present last night at the reopening of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden... The distinguished audience included the Prime Minister and Mrs Attlee and many members of the Cabinet and their ladies, as well as members of the Diplomatic Corps."[163]

ınd to draw allusions based on ancient civilisations, the references of which ;ould be seen in the ceremony surrounding the event and the building itself:

"We do not nowadays consult auspices and look for omens before embarking on a new enterprise, as the Romans did. If we did we might not find the omens encouraging. But we can on an occasion like last night, when the great curtain went up again at last at the Royal Opera, sense whether the start is auspicious even for so chronically precarious an art as English opera. It was more than auspicious, it was festive and it symbolised the rolling back of some of our oppressions from our minds, for the King had come with his family and his Ministers to give their blessing and we the audience had done what we could to respond, longissimo intervallo, of course, in a sartorial sense to Mr. Oliver Messe's brave and beautiful spectacle on stage.
It has proved to be a sound policy not, in making a new start, to have everything brand new....
...last night's auspicious beginning of a new and difficult but very exciting adventure."[164]

The Times then went on to give considerable coverage to the dress of the Royal Party:

"The reopening of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, with the Sadler's Wells ballet company's performance of the Sleeping Beauty last night brought back the festive feeling of the pre-war season. The King and Queen, with Queen Mary, Princess Elizabeth, and Princess Margaret received a great ovation from the full house when they entered the box. The Prime Minister and Mrs Attlee were in the distinguished audience.
The King was in naval uniform. The Queen wore a picture gown of the palest grey tulle ornamented with rows of cyclamen and silver and scalloped embroidery. Down the side of the gown were bunches of flowers formed of the same material shaded to match the embroidery. With it she wore a small tiara of diamonds, and a white fur cape was over her shoulders.
Queen Mary also had a tiara and wore a coat of brocade with a high collar of brown fur. Princess Elizabeth wore a simply cut evening gown of pale rose-pink and Princess Margaret was in white. Both had sprays of white flowers at the shoulder."[165]

The great champion of accessibility of opera for the English people, Professor Dent believed that a new ethos and democratization of the country would be translated into the social configuration of the national opera house:

"But it does not seem to me unreasonable to suppose that the war has awakened in many hundreds of thousands of people a realisation that many things which formerly they considered to be too high-brow or too grand for them are now easily within their imaginative and financial grasp and that many things which used to be considered the pleasant amenities of a fortunate few, should more be regarded as universal necessities."[166]

Dent was not the only one to espouse such a philosophy. Accessibility to a hitherto restricted experience was to be a keyword for a new generation and attendance at the opera was deemed to be part of that process. In the following quotation from *The Times* it is interesting that the journalist uses phrases such as "the right sort of audience" and "tradition" in an attempt to endorse the creation of the Sadlers Wells company. It is as if an attempt to establish a new meaning in opera attendance borrows so heavily from the past

that the new experience can only be deemed successful if it has components which minutely simulate the old experience.

> "In short, this was the right sort of audience for the right sort of performance; one which proves that the tradition of Sadler's Wells has so far established itself that even the unfavourable conditions of the present time cannot shake it."[167]

The desire to artificially impose a change in the traditional social structure of the opera audience was not to be fulfilled, as Lord Harewood discovered. He presumed that the bastions of the old order would relinquish their positions to the new. He was betrayed not only by their refusal to give up their seats but also unwittingly by the constraints of their dress standards.

> "My idea was that the premiere would bring together the arts community in a tribute to the Queen, not the sort of people who had attended the Coronation. But the reality was that Covent Garden was full of official big-wigs who thought that they should be there. Totally the wrong audience. Apart from anything else, everyone was wearing gloves. As you can imagine, the sound of people either clapping or not clapping in gloved hands is feeble. The piece wrongly gained the reputation of being an insult to the young Queen."[168]

In this instance an attempt at social engineering was clearly thwarted by those who knew and upheld their relationship to opera. When the Queen was in attendance at the opera house for *Gloriana,* an opera composed in her honour, their duty was to splendidly represent their order. It seems naïve that Lord Harewood, himself cousin to the Queen, would have failed to recognise such a call to arms.

The critic Ian Bevan comments on the same event apparently unperturbed by Lord Harewood's designs, for he appears convinced of the real reasons for royal patronage:

> "At the gala performance of *Gloriana*, the royal party did not sit in the usual royal box on one side but in a box made for the night in the centre of the grand tier - as has been the custom at Covent Garden for royal galas since 1948. Although this involves a lot of work ... it is willingly done because it gives the audience a much better view of the royal party.
>
> One of the important points at a royal gala is that the presence of royalty should be emphasised and, in a sense, made part of the performance."[169]

By 1956 no more experiments of this sort were made. Attention was directed to more traditional forms of operatic presentation and the development of its quintessential function through the art of the gala. The gala performance as described here represents the ultimate separation of the house and audience from the art. This description emphasizes the disinterest of both royal parties in operatic performance as distinguished from the importance of the

event as part of state ceremonial function. The opera was indeed a magnificent stage designed to show off the brilliance of what remained of the empire and a focal point of national pride.

> "It was probably, in fact, the need to entertain Royalty that had prompted Covent Garden to offer Sutherland the Amina rôle in Sonnambula. The King and Queen of Nepal were on a State Visit to London and Her Majesty's Government were anxious to entertain these distinguished guests. Since none of Britain's Royal Highnesses are supposed to enjoy Grand Opera, and the Nepalese Royal Family no doubt could understand it not at all, a gala performance at the Royal Opera House had inevitably been chosen by the Government as the means of such entertaining. ...
> Lord Home, the Foreign Secretary, received his long-suffering Royal guests in the foyer of the Opera House. Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Philip and the King and Queen of Nepal were then escorted up to the Royal Box with its gold and crimson chairs and the two gilded demi-thrones presented to the Opera House by Queen Victoria and her Consort after the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851.
> To-night a specially constructed Royal Box in the centre of the Grand Tier was canopied in watered silk of pale yellow, white and silver. Above the box were the crowns of Britain and Nepal. Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip wore Nepalese Orders – and lights blazed from the diamond tiara and necklace which had been South Africa's twenty-first birthday present to the then Princess Elizabeth. Prince Philip wore knee-breeches and the Order of the Garter. Men in the audience wore white ties and tails, orders and decorations; women wore gowns and jewels. The whole of the crimson and gold auditorium was hung with chains of magnolia. As the trumpeters played their fanfare, and the performance began, who cared, on this splendid occasion, that outside it poured with rain and that Madame Sutherland, as she entered the stage door, had got wet?"[170]

Indeed, in the 20th century as in the 19th, the gala performance is a significant indicator of many of the aspects of opera going. Writing on these performances in the catalogue of a retrospective exhibition on Covent Garden Michael Wood distinguishes between the rôles which galas serve, stating that "There are, at the Opera House, two kinds of Galas", the first kind:

> "...are informal gay affairs with a small Royal Box arranged in the middle of the Grand Tier and are nearly always graced by the presence of HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. The audience is made up of followers of either the opera or ballet and the occasion is usually a world premiere or the premiere of a new production. A large part of the audience are 'regulars' and a great many are friends of each other so that they have the atmosphere of a large party."[171]

The notion of the audience knowing each other, and consciously participating in an off-stage performance is clearly his idea of the event. The second kind of gala is one of political significance:

> "Then there is the less frequent but much greater State Performance, which is arranged as part of the entertainment for a visiting Head of State. There have been seven since the War, the first being for the French President in 1950.
> On these occasions a large part of the theatre is taken over by Government Hospitality for the Government, the various diplomatic missions – leaders from all various walks of life and other distinguished people."[172]

This was of course not a new use of opera by the post war government. At the end of the 19th century for example we see state rivalries played out at the opera house on the symbolic occasion of a royal marriage.

> "Sir Augustus Harris gave, by royal command, a State performance at Covent Garden, in honour of the marriage of the present Prince and Princess of Wales. ...This was the 3rd royal gala representation at the opera within five years. As already noted, the first had been for the Shah of Persia, and the second was in honour of the Emperor and Empress of Germany. At each of these celebrations the decoration of the auditorium was upon an increasing scale of gorgeous and lavish splendour; but not so that of the vestibule or grand staircase, nor even that of the foyer, since the impresario disliked the idea of spending large sums of upon beautifying a building of which he was only a yearly tenant. Hence an amusing bit of good-humoured criticism from the Prince of Wales (now King Edward VIII) on the night of the Kaiser's visit in 1891. During one of the intervals Harris was sent for and presented to their Imperial Majesties. Before leaving, he availed himself of the opportunity quietly to ask the Prince of Wales whether he was please with the decorations. His Royal Highness replied that he was delighted; then, taking the manager apart he added in an undertone: 'Delighted with everything, Harris, but the old carpet in the foyer. It has been there so many years! Really, it was too bad not to put down a new one for a night such as this!' Needless to add that the hint was acted upon long before the next gala night."[173]

This notion of the gala political event is still very much alive today. For example, even when the venue for opera is not necessarily 'grand' the event may still have high symbolic importance:

> "Now, until September (Caracalla Baths) they are the scene of Gian Paolo Cresci's ostentatious efforts to put Roman opera back alongside La Scala or La Fenice in Venice. 'I want to put this theatre in the spotlight,' he says. 'When heads of state, ministers and ambassadors come to Rome, where should they go if not to the opera?'"[174]

Not only are the people in attendance at such events, those distinguished in their rôle as state emissaries, but in traditional venues, the theatre itself is transformed to perform its function:

> "A very large Royal Box, seating between thirty and forty people is set up in the centre of the Grand Tier. The theatre is specially decorated, the Crush Bar is closed to the ordinary public and decorated in its turn, and in place of the Long Bar a beautiful silken tent is set up for the Royal party, furnished with priceless pictures, chandeliers and furniture from the museums. The Entrance Hall and Grand Staircase are also decorated and Yeoman Warders in their red and gold Tudor uniforms are on duty.
>
> The normal seats and boxes are taken out from the Grand Tier and the Stalls Circle, and rows of small excessively hard gilt chairs are put in their place – on which those who are invited have to sit for a very uncomfortable evening."[175]

and, of course, the audience decks itself in full regalia, not to be outdone by the performances of the state, and the house.

> "The most important, as connected with the fortunes and reputation of the theatre, was unquestionably the visit of the Queen 'in state.' Friendly agencies were

> employed to procure this desired result, but fortune seemed determined to smile upon me just now in every way, and my task was not difficult. Several of the leading men of the day smoothed the path for the manager, and even strewed it in some sort with roses. The 'state visit' was fixed for Thursday 20th July, and there was considerable excitement existing on the occasion, not only as this was the first state visit since Her Majesty's accession, but for more than ten years no monarch had appeared in state at the opera-house. As may be supposed, considerable care and boundless expense were bestowed upon the decoration of royal boxes and in spite of some carpings and cavillings at what were considered the exorbitant prices demanded, the evening passed over with *éclat*, not to say with triumph."[176]

The undeniable symbols of glamour and importance were displayed in the dress, the adornments, the decorations and spatial configurations. The gala night was a great state celebration.

> "...State Performances are in a way almost glimpses of fairyland – the whole theatre decorated by some great designer like Oliver Messel, Cecil Beaton or Dennis Lennon, the huge Royal Box, the ladies in their beautiful dresses, jewels and tiaras, and the men in full evening dress with orders and decorations. For a brief moment one is transported back to those pictures of the pre-First World War period when people lived and looked like that most of the time."[177]

Michael Wood laments that the gala performance has lost some of its meaning in recent times, as the opera opens its doors to a greater, and less select, public:

> "Galas are survivals of a bygone and almost forgotten age – when it was normal for men to wear white ties and women their best clothes and jewels if they went to the opera. The audience then was drawn from a very small select group of the well-to-do. Now all can, and do, go and wear whatever clothes they like."[178]

Pierre-Jean Rémy describes the opera-going public of London in the 1980s as being deeply entrenched in the class system although certain eccentricities of dress may initially appear deceptive. He also draws certain comparisons between the rigidity of the English ceremonial caste system and that of the USSR. These analogies have been made more than once in the context of opera in totalitarian states:

> "C'est en effet un curieux public que celui de Covent Garden, où se côtoient plus que dans aucun Opéra national, dans le monde, robes du soir et smokings avec cols roulés, tennis et laisser-aller de bon aloi de tout intellectuel de Hampstead ou de Highgate qui se respecte. On se croise, on se salue parfois car on est souvent de la même famille: celle qui tient les rênes de l'Angleterre; puis on gagne la place à laquelle on a droit, dans un système hiérarchisé tel que seules les castes indiennes – et peut-être la nomenklatura soviétique! – en connaissent en matière de barrières sociales."[179]

Adorno writing of the post-war opera public also highlights the inheritance of behavioural signs and codes:

"The conduct of today's opera habitué is retrospective. He guards the cultural assets as possessions. His creed is a line to be voiced in a local dialect. 'Still a damn good old opera isn't it?' The prestige comes from the period when opera was still to be counted with more pretentious forms."[180]

There did emerge however a new opera going public in the latter 20th century. The following extract taken from an advertisement for a new book published in the early 1990s clearly sets out some of the functions which the successful businessman's wife must perform:

"The new lady in the life of a successful man ... can afford to pay for herself, and instead of pottering in the back garden attends Covent Garden on opening nights. She's the ultimate accessory."[181]

It highlights the social rôle of the new ascendant class which supports the opera. Royalty has had to share its partnerships with a wider public than before. Its rôle has changed as the royal family now fawns to its public and leaves us to pose the question: who really personifies power today? This is demonstrated by the Queen Mother's understanding of the importance of a photo opportunity with the most celebrated tenor Luciano Pavarotti:

"Sir Martin Gilliat, private secretary: 'The other day at Covent Garden she (Queen Mother) met the singer Pavarotti and instead of just shaking her hand he kissed most of her arm right up to the elbow as Italians are inclined to do. She realised in her niceness that many of the photographers from the Press were looking the other way and said to Pavarotti, Please can you do that again'."[182]

Notions of going to the opera, its accessibility and relative expense, are often shared by its traditional audience and those who traditionally had other forms of entertainment. This, it could be argued, is why the following anecdotal conversation appears so amusing:

"I was on my way to the first night of Luisa Miller at Covent Garden when I stopped for petrol at a garage in Park Lane. Months before, the North Country pump attendant there told me he had seen me in the seats behind him at Aida. When I asked him if he didn't find the stalls rather expensive at Covent Garden, he said they cost no more than any other pump man spent on a 'piss-up' on Friday nights.[183]

Yet David Mellor M.P., former Arts Minister, asserts that opera's cost acts as a barrier to participation:

"...the cost is the final straw. The most expensive tickets at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden are now 112 pounds. It charges those prices, greedily swallows a subsidy of more than 7 million a year and yet has still managed to show a deficit of 4.5 million for 1990/91. Impressive. You can pay as little as 3 of course, but that will get you a restricted view. And we don't even have a tradition of opera in this country."[184]

It is also interesting that Mellor says that there is no "tradition of opera" in Britain. It has been demonstrated so far in this thesis that in fact the only indisputable tradition is the British insistence that there is no tradition of opera. Interestingly, Mellor goes on to use the new public language of the operatic democrat, insisting that the opera lover is the traditional opera-goer:

> "Privately, I may deplore the way opera houses have become the exclusive preserve of the fat cats, as seat prices year on year soar into the stratosphere, leaving the ordinary music lover on the outside looking in, or confined to the rafters, but one has to accept that today opera is inevitably expensive."[185]

It always was, in Mellor's unlovely phrase, a preserve for "fat cats"! It would, in fact, have been more plausible for Mellor simply to state what he must surely have known from his experience in his former position as Minister for the Arts, that the opera house would be maintained with relatively high seat prices in order that the traditional audience could participate in a time-honoured social ritual.

Of course there are these days concessions made for a slightly wider audience to attend the opera in order to give a voice to the state-led deceptive rhetoric that opera has a new democratic meaning. The authors of *How to Bluff your way in Opera* make the following statement about audiences and the relationship between seating and dress standards. (One is reminded that humour is always grounded in truth):

> "Opera audiences tend to like to dress up to do justice to the chandeliers and the champagne in the crush bar. A lot of people go to the opera nowadays dressed in jeans and open necked shirts, and so forth, but they are kept in the back seats."[186]

And less humoristic jibes in contemporary newspapers allude to the same meaning:

> "There is no doubting its elitism. You only have to hang about near the doors at Covent Garden and count the people with fur coats, animals slung dead-eyed across their backs. These people think expense equals the arts because that is all they know."[187]

Finally, opera in England in the latter 20th century still potently contains the rite, ceremony, majesty and pomp of previous eras. The Church of England, the state and the monarchy are, in the following article, equated with the significance of a fictitious operatic scene and despite the obvious imaginary relationship this does best sum up the Inauguration of George Carey,

Archbishop of Canterbury, not operatic in intention but operatic in the greatest sense of the word, in nature:

> "...this lavish ceremony was as perfectly predictable as only the British establishment can manage.
> ...
> Yet the audience in the nave loved it...
> The rest of the ceremony owed more to high drama and opera.
> Enter fanfare of trumpeters from right, in brilliant red, moving across to left. A procession of several hundred... From the rear enter two princesses, Diana in white, Margaret hard to see in a black hat.
> Then Dr Carey, offstage, appears on the BBC's monitors, approaching from the south behind his cross, his buttermilk-coloured stole billowing in a high wind, his hood decorated with crimson and gold flames.
> He seizes a staff, takes careful aim, and knocks resoundingly three times on the oak door. Thus knocked the ghost in don Giovanni..."[188]

The similarity between French and English critics' views of the opera is most evident in their reminiscences on dress and occasion which the opera provided. Leiris, like Klein and Rosenthal evokes his childhood memories of opera and the dress of the audience which engendered the notion of being somewhere special:

> "Souvenir d'enfance: avant la guerre de 1914-18, le parterre de l'Opéra de Paris entièrement garni de messieurs en habit noir qu'on voyait sortir leurs lorgnettes au moment du ballet..."[189]

Later, during the turbulence of 1968, Pierre Boulez challenged the very nature of the opera audience's motivations suggesting that the feathered memories of writers such as Leiris should be relegated to museum status:

> "The opera audience is something else entirely. What I mean is, you can compare opera to a musty old wardrobe. But, thank God, there is only one left, and that is Vienna, where the opera house is still the centre of existence – a relic, a well-cared for museum."[190]

Yet Boulez does acknowledge that it still serves the function as a place to be seen. Speaking as he does, from the standpoint of a contemporary musician, it is not surprising that he is appalled that the audience visits the opera house for reasons other than musical.

Pierre-Paul Menenger suggests that it is the collective pleasure of seeing and being seen and as such acknowledged as part of a select group, the audience mirroring the opulence of the stage, which continues to be one of the peculiarities of going to the opera:

> "La distinction bien réelle que marque l'institution lyrique entre le monde social exterieur, infiniment divers, et ce noyau homogène du public très choisi des habitués conditionné, au-dela de la jouissance décrite par la psychanalyse, le plaisir collectif que prend une élite au spectacle de son omnipresence, si visible,

et des symboles, si expressifs, de son prestige et de son raffinement. ...tous les deux spectacles, de la salle et de la scène, sont inseparables.
Toilettes, parures, manières, toute la symbolique de la condition social trouvait son meilleur emploi et son 'rendement' le plus élevé sur cette scène non moins reglée qui formaient la salle, les loges, le foyer, les couloirs...."[191]

Patureau makes the point that early in the 1980s the Paris Opéra having ost some of its prestige and thus to extrapolate, some of its real meaning, estituted formal wear evenings in order to distinguish between the new opera ublic who indeed could now gain entry to a performance and those who could articipate in the full meaning of the event:

"L'institution des 'soirées habilléees' en smoking et robe longue, distinctes des soirées ordinaires, maintenait encore, lors de la saison 1980/1981 et pour une petit fraction du public, la tradition d'une élégance codifiée. Depuis cette date et pour toute représentation, seuls les spectateurs à la 'tenue negligée' peuvent se voir refuser l'accès de la salle."[192]

nd this view is confirmed by Bovier-Lapierre who suggests that the new élite n France is constituted on the basis of its financial resources and no longer hat of social and cultural lineage:

"Jadis art réservé à une élite sociale et culturelle, l'art lyrique semble aujourd'hui réservé aux seuls privilégiés de la fortune."[193]

here is however one other active group which emerged, that of the 'opera uff', those individuals who travel constantly in the pursuit of opera and the peratic experience. Poizat interviews some young aficionados and we iscover that an important element of the experience for them is to recognise nd be recognised by other members of the same club, the new, global udience. This is openly acknowledged by them:

"Claude: Ce qu'il faut quand même noter, c'est que c'est toujours le même public qu'on retrouve pour l'Opéra de Paris. C'est aussi le même qu'on retrouve à Bayreuth, le même qu'on retrouve à la Scala, le même qu'on retrouve à Vienne.
... dans cet univers on s'aperçoit qu'on retrouve toujours les mêmes.
Guy: Ah, c'est vrai ça ! C'est très frappant ! Moi, je circule énormément dans les Opéras en Europe et quand je vais à la Scala ou quand je vais à l'Opéra de Vienne, quand je vais à Munich, quand je vais à Paris ou quand je vais à Londres, systématiquement je rencontre quelqu'un que je connais... A chaque fois, quelle que soit la date !"[194]

eiris describes the audience at the opera in Berlin in 1960s with thinly veiled ntempt, suggesting that it has lost its rarefied rôle having become just nother 'necessity of life' to which the amateur is now more of a 'glutton' than 'gourmet'. Leiris, a product of the beginning of the century, reveals to us at this change in the audience also means a change in opera, as if for him,

in this instance opera is no more as it is given over to a vulgarisation of interest.

> "Au Stadtsoper il y a derrière les rangées de fauteuils d'orchestre, un promenoir où se presse une foule composée en majeure partie de jeunes gens dont beaucoup sont munis de jumelles aussi grosses que des jumelles de turfistes. Ici, l'opéra semble se ranger parmi les *nécessités de la vie*. Mais cela ne veut pas dire que les gens sont de vrais dilettantes. Gloutons plutôt que gourmets, ils emplissent la salle quoi qu'on y represente, s'abandonnent aux ovations les plus intempestives et saluent au besoin de leurs bravos un interprète qui chante faux."[195]

Even La Scala has been influenced by this 'wind change'. Spatial configurations were subtly tampered with to reflect the new political order. We learn that:

> "On 11th May, 1946 the mended Scala was opened again with the auditorium a faithful reproduction of what had been before – with one important difference: the centre box was filled with old men and women from Verdi's rest home for aged Musicians."[196]

Yet the dress standards, and the ceremony and costuming of intendants remains, to this day, one of the most impressive of European opera houses:

> "At about 8.30, the white marble foyer of the world's most elegant opera house began to fill. Not a pair of female shoulders was un-minked; not a female throat unbejewelled; not a head of female hair untinted. The world's most elegant opera house is patronised by the world's most elegantly dressed women.
> At the auditorium entrance, attendants, costumed to look half vesper, half lord mayor in black uniforms and silver chains of office, waited sombrely for admission tickets – and for the hundred lire tip they would receive as they ushered each utterly aristocratic Milanese couple into their seats."[197]

In fact mink is so firmly equated with going to the opera in Milan that La Scala recently became a venue for demonstrations against the wearing of fur:

> "A group of attractive animal-rights activists mingles with the crowd in the foyer of the opera house in La Scala. Suddenly the protesters unbutton their second-hand, imitation-mink coats, reveal their bare breasts and cry; 'Better naked than in fur'."[198]

ate arrival at the opera almost always elicits comments as other members of ıe audience closely regard their concurrents. This practice was often ɔnsidered to be *de rigeur* and a point of fashion in the 18th and 19th ɛnturies whereas now, in a society where time is determined by constraints : current work practices, is deemed to be socially unacceptable. Comments, ɔwever are almost always made as in this instance in Vienna:

> "As the house lights are beginning to dim, the missing occupants arrive, squeezing through the narrow space between the chairs to occupy their seats at the front of the box. The woman is young and elegantly dressed in her black gown with elaborate silver-thread embroidery. Her long blonde hair falls in a

> voluptuous curve down one side of her head. I notice that she wears very little jewellery but, like many European women, she uses what seems to me far too much perfume. Her escort is a good deal older. Stocky, bearded, with rimless glasses, he is wearing a black bow tie with a lounge suit."[199]

Even though society has changed fundamentally and working people now attend, the essential character of the opera may have changed little. Horne suggests that certain non-operatic events so resembles opera that they should be interpreted as part of the opera experience:

> "In Denmark, although the Foketing meets in a royal palace, the monarch's only role in the opening of parliament is to sit in a royal box, as if parliament were an opera."[200]

This held true even in countries where society had been shaken by tremendous political and social change. Spike Hughes, writing during the height of the cold war, makes the point that even in Communist countries, the social codes for attendance at the opera remain on a par with that of Covent Garden:

> "...both East and West met on the common ground of J. Strauss' music and there was more mink and ermine and sable sitting in the 10 shilling seats than is seen at Covent Garden these days in a year. It is a quaint thought that communist and capitalist women should have in common an insatiable yearning for the same fur."[201]

ronically it is in the United States that the traditional meaning of opera proved a point of audience resistance to attendance. Roseanne Martorella comments hat a study of opera going habits in 1974 demonstrated that preparation to go o the opera was perceived by Americans as an obstacle to attending:

> "The NCA Study revealed that opera attendance could increase substantially if it has less 'class' requiring less formal dress, and less planning and preparation for attendance."[202]

lowever the world of dress codes, clubs and society still predominates at the Met as Pierre-Jean Rémy writing in the 1980s demonstrates:

> "Soirée au Met: rendez-vous à 18h30 dans le hall d'entrée avec... l'attaché culturel. Il m'a fait part, par sa secrétaire, d'un dîner en *black tie* avant le spectacle. Je découvrirai que nous sommes invités par le Metropolitan Opera Club. Le dîner a lieu dans la salle à manger du club, aménagée tout en haut du bâtiment. C'est l'héritier du même club qui existait jadis au vieux Met. A peu près 350 membres, pas plus, qui paient une fortune la joie d'être à part. A part dans leur salle, à part à leurs (mauvaises) places."[203]

udiences are often compared by critics as a way of describing one opera ouse or another. Emphasis is mainly placed on the dress they wear and their

behaviour as shown in the following example which compares Paris to London, Milan, New York and Barcelona:

> "The Paris opera audience is very different from that of London, Milan or New York. In London, half the audience look as if they are fretting about the baby-sitter, or whether 1930's dinner-jacket or evening dress will finally fall apart. In Milan, the women parade like lady peacocks and the men look as if none of them belong legally to their companions. In New York, the audience is in hot pursuit of culture – and will find culture whether it is available or not. But in Paris the audience wear lounge suits and day dresses and expressions of uncompromising severity. It matters not that, by many, they are considered philistine and uninformed: by themselves they are regarded as expert and powerful. In their enthusiasm or their coldness they can be as ruthless as Barcelona's *aficionados*: in their attitude as they arrive for a performance is all the heart-warming excitement of a London accountant confronted with the need to prepare an auditor's report for which he will receive no fee."[204]

Bovier-Lapierre remarks that the audience at the Bolshoi in Moscow is actually watching a performance of the power and authority of the USSR as an icon of the unification of the diverse cultures of the state held up as a symbol of grandeur under one symbolic roof:

> "Le *théâtre Bolchoï* de Moscou accueille les 'pèlerins' venus de tous les Etats de l'Union se recueillir au mausolée de Lénine, en sa salle 'historique' mais aussi en la salle de 6 000 places où se réunit le Soviet suprême. La soirée au *Bolchoï* participe d'un circuit touristico-politique à l'usage des divers ressortisants venus reconnaître le pouvoir russe, le fondateur du socialisme, et l'unité d'un Etat réunnisant une centaine de nationalités."[205]

Pick makes a similar comparison suggesting that the Russian audience bears a remarkable similarity, in terms of clothing and behaviour, to that of Covent Garden:

> "I am amused to see all around me the kind of behaviour which would-be Western revolutionaries think 'typical' of Covent Garden or of the decadent West End. There are the fur stoles, the painted faces, the long gowns, the dapper theatrical suitings; there are the noisy greetings, the forced mechanical laughter of the stiff groups intent upon their socialising, the endless standing up in the seat to be seen, and the tell-tale roving eyes of the socialisers. All perfectly harmless, but quite different from the single-minded purpose with which citizens are said by the guide books to attend entertainments."[206]

t is not only the audience which dresses up in a mode which they consider to ›e required by the house. Often, the performers themselves are attired in :lothing suited to command the epithets of grand or luxurious. A recent ashion article which discussed costumes by a well known designer gives the ame away.

> "In the Royal Opera's Cosi Fan Tutte, however, Giorgio Armani is keeping his imagination safely tucked away in his palazzo. Far from giving vent to his creative demons, Armani has provided the cast with outfits from the Spring/Summer

collection with only a pair of wedding dresses at the end adapted from it. Moonlighting was never easier.
But opera is a regal affair, and the maestro's putty and ecru creations hardly inspire the wearer to break out into song and then die a magnificent death."[207]

t is significant that in 1995, a journalist can so categorically assert that "opera s a regal affair" and thus denigrate the presentation of all that does not look egal upon the operatic stage.

Thus it is very clear that whether a writer is French, English or American, whether a satirist, a critic, a spectator, an opera-goer, the 'cultural assumptions' and the 'systems of social signals' are remarkably consistent.

4.2.1 Operatic paraphernalia

We have so far focused on the behaviour of those who have gained admittance to opera houses but not paused to look either at the actual meaning of rites of entrance nor the objects which one uses to gain right of passage. Many a commentator on opera will express the view that opera evokes the mysterious. Catherine Clémant's description of the opera house is amongst the most evocative:

"Entering the opera. Passing one by one through the gates of ritual, buying tickets, presenting them, letting oneself be guided by a woman who opens the doors; penetrating the heart. The immense room."[208]

he experience of partaking in the event, preparing to go there, arriving, ntering, mingling and finally seeing the work forms a powerful whole. This is upported by a whole range of materials from ceremonial etiquette to the items esigned exclusively for the event itself.

Ritualistic ceremonials and specially created objects all contribute to the ngular experience of going to the opera and over time may take on a gnificance of their own in the memory of those who had experienced the vent. Horne suggests that:

"The fame of an object becomes its meaning; what finally matters may be a souvenir postcard, perhaps even an admission ticket kept for years afterwards with other mementoes of passing visions of how life had been."[209]

'e pause here to investigate the nature of some of these objects in their form nd function. The artefact, the systems of ticketing, subscribing, the nature of ogrammes and playbills, all contribute, and are as important to, the

compound meaning of the opera, and articulate their individual importance as he house itself and the behaviour of those who enter it.

Obtaining tickets and subscriptions

Traditionally it was those who subscribed to theatres, maintained boxes and seats who dominated the tone of and access to the Opera. Johnson points out that "Of the 135 annual subscribers in the first-level boxes between 749 and 1757, 4 were commoners, and 3 were wealthy bourgeois of Paris. The rest were aristocrats."[210] The subscription system based on social distinction in the 19th century was an important element of opera in England and was cleverly supported by Harris, who identified the new audience that his theatre was attracting which reflected the rise of the English middle class:

> "Two other important changes took place during Harris's nine seasons at Covent Garden. The first was the gradual change of the type of subscriber who supported the season. When Harris announced his 1892 series of Wagner performances, he invited a separate subscription for them; this gave an opportunity to those people who were still unable to secure boxes and stalls for the regular seasons, which was still supported mainly by 'society'."[211]

Of course if one was not part of "society" the most efficient way of obtaining a seat was to find someone with a more established position in society than oneself. Mapleson remarks on the difficulties involved in obtaining a ticket even when charged to report on the production for a national newspaper, only solving this difficulty by meeting an individual from the 'right' society and dining at a socially acceptable venue:

> "Accordingly, when it became my duty to write an account of the first production of *Le Prophète* at the Royal Italian Opera, I received instructions from my editor about sending in "copy," but was not furnished with a stall. I was to manage, somehow or other, to hear the opera, and I was in any case to send in a notice of it. I endeavoured to buy a ticket, but everything was sold.
>
> In my despair I chanced to meet the American philanthropist, Mr George Peabody, well known by his charitable deeds, and who hastened on this occasion to perform a good work towards me. He assured me that the difficulty which troubled me was not so great as I imagined. It was now late in the afternoon. The performance was to take place that evening, and Mr. Peabody suggested that first of all the best thing I could do was to dine with him at the 'Hummums'. Thence, after finishing a bottle of excellent port, we walked quietly to the gallery entrance of the opera – at that time under the piazza, next door to the Bedford Hotel – bought our tickets, and found places in the very front row."[212]

At the Palais Garnier, a similar system to that of Harris' based on caste, formed the subscribing audience, which treated their subscriptions like the fiefs of the ennobled families, as hereditary honours:

"Transmissible de père en fils comme un bien foncier, ce dernier est monopolisé par un groupe de familles recrutées dans les classes les plus aisées de la société. Proprietaires immuables de leurs fauteuils présents à l'Opéra toute l'année et à vie, ces abonnés sont l'essence même du théâtre."[213]

Almost a century later, in 1972 Rolf Liebermann, director of the Paris)péra, instigating his new policy of making opera more glamorous, returned he subscription system as a way of gaining access. This, according to atureau, was a significant way in which he renewed the opera's links with its raditional audience. By renewing its links with France's patrician class .iebermann offered once more a venue which they could frequent and in which hey could 'see and be seen' by their peers as well as display themselves to ne rest of society:

"En faisant l'abonnement une des armes maitresses de la reconstitution d'un public, on renouait avec la tradition du passé."[214]

For those who were in a sense disenfranchised from such acts, obtaining ticket to the opera took on quite another significance. Leiris comments on ne effects that the relative popularity of opera has had on access to tickets:

"A Vienne, les amateurs d'Opéra sont si nombreux qu'il est impossible au touriste de se procurer des places sans recourir au marché noir. Le plus simple est évidemment de passer sa commande au portier de l'hotel."[215]

dorno also comments on this phenomenon:

"Not only at a profane sanctum like the Vienna Opera will nonsubscribers and others without preference even to buy a ticket, but at plain German provincial theatres as well. In Vienna about 1920, fanatics lined up on the eve of star performances, ready to stay awake all night in order to grab a ticket, perhaps in the morning."[216]

s such the black market, this time for tourists, became an alternative when emand exceeded supply.

On occasion, even buying a ticket can prove an impossible task. esirous of attending a performance of *Aida* at Verona in the early 1980s, the riter tried to procure one of the 30,000 on sale for the performance. Finding is unobtainable through open means a solution presented itself in the form a seller of plastic raincoats, who for a small charge, (less than the price of ticket to the amphitheatre in Covent Garden) lead a small group of seven illing amateurs through back paths into the arena itself.

These difficulties did not only occur in Europe, although it seems to have een cost, not social class or connections which acted as an arbiter in the)llowing arrangement:

> "A party of amateurs would buy a ticket between them, each one taking 20 minutes of the ticket and returning with the pass-out check to the next. Lots were drawn to decide who was to go in first; and in the event of anyone overstaying his 20 minutes he had to pay for the whole ticket; correctness of time being the essence of the arrangement."[217]

The opera ticket itself indicates to the purchaser the nature of the event. 'ickets for important occasions at the Royal Opera House have been designed) look like a royal summons. In recent times, the introduction of computerised cketing systems has meant that this distinction has all but been eradicated, owever invitations to operatic events such as openings or galas bear the allmarks of the more traditional symbolic value of the ticket.

It has been observed that obtaining a title of access to the opera can ave many and various sources. Traditionally tickets were obtained through ubscription or sales booths for those who could afford them or as Leiris and lapleson recognised that if all else fails then there are some less conventional ieans of obtaining such passage. There have also always existed less)mfortable ways of securing a ticket which entail spending many long hours ı queues at the opera house in the hope that one will be able to purchase a :ket for a performance. In the 20th century the opera audience includes ıose who buy tickets through the box office and subscription series, the 'ivate patron, and other contributors – including the foundations, the)rporations and the government.

Queues

Queues are another segregating factor in the process of gaining access the opera. Those who have the means to purchase a ticket to the better :ats are not required to undergo such a trial. They have access to systems reservation which do not exact physical discomfort, such as subscriptions company seats. For those who do not possess such *entrées* there is also tradition of being made to undertake ritualistic procedures in order to obtain ı entrance ticket. Mapleson remarks that in Chicago his responsibility was

nited to buying wood to keep his patrons warm whilst they diligently waited
i their queue:

> "During all this visit to Chicago there was one unbroken line of intending buyers waiting to secure tickets at the box office; and frequently I had to pay as much as twenty dollars for wood consumed during the night to keep the purchasers warm."[218]

his was not just a 19th century American phenomenon, and those who uffered the hardships of waiting in queues for tickets were not always ccorded the same privileges as the members of the public who had more asily gained theirs. This is clearly demonstrated by the reaction of the public n the cancellation of *La Cenerentola* at Covent Garden on June 13, 1934:

> "...Though many of the social stallites queued up in the foyer to get their money back, or change tickets for the later date, the majority of those who had stood since the day before to get cheaper seats refused to go home."[219]

owever even the lengthy and often frustrating task of queuing for seats was ubtly transformed into a genteel activity. The very wish to attend the opera stinguished its participants from those wishing to partake in other forms of ntertainment. The following statement appeared in *The Times* in 1946:

> "already one opera lover has written to the management to say that friendships made in a Covent Garden queue are among the most important in life.[220]

Writing her reminiscences in 1950 Ida Cook describes her experience of e Covent Garden queue in detail. Firstly she explains the queue etiquette:

> "In my happy youth the gallery was not bookable. Instead, under the masterly management of Gough and Hailey, our two 'stool' men, we hired camp stools at an early hour of the morning (usually from seven o'clock onwards) and left our camp stool during the day to mark our place while we went away to earn our living."[221]

nd then the experience of the queue itself:

> "But mostly I remember only early summer mornings, when one's heart was high because one lived in a wonderland of opera, of interminable conversations with fellow enthusiasts in the queue, of glimpses of and sometimes snatches of conversation with the stars and a dozen other delights.
> The friendships and enmities of that queue!"[222]

At Covent Garden today, it may now be rare to see people queuing up night, however the 65 amphitheatre seats sold at 10.00 a.m. on the day of rformance ensures that the tradition of queuing up for seats in the gods is changed. The cost of these tickets is not necessarily kept to a minimum vel. In 1990 the price of a normal opera performance was £10 but if a well own international star were to perform, this was doubled to £20. Thus the

otential purchaser was paying a price higher than that of a theatre seat in the Vest End, was relegated to the heights of the theatre, and had to make imself available during normal working hours to purchase the ticket. Indeed, purchaser of such a seat is still, today, led up a back stairwell and barred om gaining access to any other part of the house and confined to the limited yer space which communicates only with this part of the house.[223]

Shirley Apthorp suggests that queuing is a particularly British institution nd that opera queues break down the normal British reserve:

> "In the course of this collective one-night stand the normally shy English will cast aside their reserve and establish conversational intimacy with anybody."[224]

he claims that those who wait in queues are the real opera lovers, willing to acrifice comfort for art.

> "They hold passionate views on design and direction, know every nuance of the score intimately, can draw comparisons with every production mounted within their adult lifetime. Around them the £100-a-seat patrons sip French champagne and try to remember the name of the evening's opera."[225]

The French developed a system of hierarchy for those queuing for the pera. Those spending the night on the steps of the Palais Garnier were iven numbers by self-nominated guardians of order and allowed to take short reaks from the queue without relinquishing their place. Poizat describes this henomenon distinguishing between the invited public departing from the dress ehearsal, (traditionally those who have contacts with the theatre and receive eir tickets directly without queuing and do not pay for their seats), and a nall group of people left waiting on its illustrious steps at the beginning of a ng vigil, in the anticipation of gaining access to the following night's erformance:

> "Il est minuit. Les spectateurs de la 'générale' qui vient de se terminer se sont dispersés. Un petit groupe pourtant reste là, debout, sur les marches. Ultime discussion sur la représentation? Quelqu'un s'approache, s'enquiert. Il reçoit alors un ticket numéroté et signé, détaché d'un carnet à souches et se joit au groupe. Se trouve ainsi constitué le noyau autour duquel tout au long de cette nuit et jusqu'à 13 h 30, heure de l'ouverture des guichets, viendront se cristalliser ceux qui sont ainsi capables de passer 13 h 30 dehors, par tous les temps, sur les marches du Palais pour obtenir deux places de fonds de loges pour une représentation de *Tristan*, places relativement bon marché, certes (65F en 1985) mais nécessitant pratiquement de rester debout pendant le spectacle si l'on veut voir toute la scène. Au long de ces treize heurs d'attente leur seul repos consistera dans les quelques cafés et le petit déjeuner qu'ils prendront à l'ouverture des établissements qui entourent l'Opéra."[226]

Such a system is indeed extraordinary yet in a sense strengthens the prestige of the house and the cult of opera going. The physical demands of a 13½ our wait compounded by a six hour performance during which the 'lucky' cket holder will need to remain on his feet, reinforce the prestige of the ouse. Access is indeed affordable by everybody but sacrifice is demanded n the case of those who are outside the right milieu.

Queues also represented a visible sign that the opera house was a nonument worthy of making sacrifices for, in terms of time and comfort, to nter. This, according to Patureau, helped sustain the image of the nportance of the house:

> "Le Palais Garnier, pour sa part, où l'on ne mesure plus le succès d'un ouvrage lyrique au nombre de spectateurs mais à l'ampleur des demandes de places non satisfaites, a bel et bien reconquis l'image de citadelle imprenable qu'il avait au début de ce siècle: dans l'opinion publique, y obtenir une place s'apparente à une prouesse le plus souvent acquise au prix de longues heures d'attente sur les marches du théâtre."[227]

Riemer, also remarks on the efforts which potential opera patrons who o not have traditional modes of access to an operatic venue, are still xpected to manifest if they wish to attend the opera. He comments wryly:

> "How better to spend two hours than by joining a serpentine queue for opera tickets? It is well after twelve when I reach its head. By then *The Marriage of Figaro* is sold out; I have to be content with *La Bohème* and *Lohengrin*.
> ...
> Early in the morning, just as on the morning of my arrival, queues form at the box office of the national theatres, where patrons eagerly inspect the large notices advertising the availability of tickets for these attractions."[228]

Playbills and programmes

Playbills and programmes provide a number of insights into the opera udience. It is interesting, for example, that programmes for gala occasions ere often, in the 19th century, printed on silk or in the shape of fans or are rger including deeper colours of crimson and gold than those designed for dinary performances.

A scan of more than 350 opera programmes, undertaken for this thesis, veals how unique is opera's place in society.

In 1911 for example, seats for the Coronation Procession were advertised Covent Garden opera playbills, thus distinguishing its clientele in terms of selectivity and access to regal performance.

To take a further illustrative example, the souvenir programme of the Williamson-Melba Grand Opera Season in His Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne n 1928 devotes fifteen of its thirty pages to advertising speciality goods and services. Footwear advertisements, for example, address the reader with the phrase "For People of Class", the Packard car is advertised at the cost of £855 when the annual average skilled worker's income was £312.[229] Men's clothing shops described themselves as "better wear for men", "the sign of excellence". The Orient Line ocean liners bringing people to the delights of he "mother country" suggested the following itinerary:

> "By leaving Melbourne in November, December or January, passengers arrive in Europe in time for the Winter Sports in Switzerland and the Season on the Riviera, and can then reach England for the Spring."[230]

Even more mundane services such as dry cleaning appealed to the possessors of luxury goods.

> "Gouge are Specialists in the dry-cleaning of Suits, Frocks, Costumes, Coats, Millinery, Furs, Gloves and Parasols"[231]

Only one page is devoted to the opera itself and two to an introduction to the season where the following revealing comments are made about the meaning of opera in the antipodes:

> "Many of us who are the sons and daughters of those brave pioneers who came here to the pristine freshness of an almost uninhabitable land, will recall the stories of their hardships, their trials and their happinesses and how they watched Australia's glorious growth and development. To those who came to seek their fortunes in this new land, what a joy it must have been to them to sometimes hear some singer in the make-shift halls, who, by his or her artistry, kept them in touch with the culture of the Homeland and Europe."[232]

pera in this sense is indeed very much equated with civilization, wealth and ulture. Since the war, even through the 'austerity years', programmes in rance and England have shown high class advertisers.

The Royal Opera House programme for the production of *Attila* in 1990 evotes nineteen of its thirty pages to advertisements. Advertised are financial stitutions, antique jewellery, swiss watches, private art galleries, the Meridian otel, chartered surveyors, corporate interior designers, executive employment mpanies, Marks and Spencers, record companies, the Opera House Shop, iends of Covent Garden, and the Musicians Benevolent Fund. We see here e changing preoccupations of the opera audience. Whereas traditional items

such as jewellery and watches are advertised there is also the introduction of corporate interests and employment offered for the upper end of the market.

The 1994 programme of *Rigoletto* from La Scala is a significant tome, including the full libretto, articles about the opera and reproductions of costumes and playbills from previous performances. The products advertised are without exception designed for the upper end of the market: Chanel perfume, Vuitton luggage, Bulgari jewellery and porcelain, commercial banks, Cartier and other Swiss watches, Mercedes Benz and Saab cars and Bohemian crystal, amongst others.

Télérama's special edition on opera in 1993 advertised such goods as Gold American Express Cards. The first advertisement contains a photograph of two tickets to see *Otello* at the Opéra Bastille, tucked into a gilt frame. The dialogue which accompanies it indicates the lifestyle of its targeted audience:

> "Bordeaux, Mercredi 11h
> - Gold Card American Express ?...
> Bonjour.
> - ...
> - Vous vous souvenez? Vous m'avez déjà réservé des places pour la soirée Gold Card à l'Opéra Bastille...
> - ...
> - Et le Carnaval de Venise?
> - ...
> - Et en plus, vous vous occupez des costumes pour le bal masqué!
> - ...
> - Formidable, nous serons deux, c'est une seconde lune de miel!"[233]

nd the second offers a taxi service, designed to get the busy ticket holder ving in a relatively expensive part of Paris to the opera on time with a urcharge of 'only' FF95, that is roughly £12.00.

> "- Service Taxi Express ?...Bonsoir.
> - ...
> - Pouvez-vous nous envoyer très rapidement un taxi avenue de Suffren?
> - ...
> - Dans 5 minutes ?
> - ...
> - Parfait, nous serons à l'heure pour le lever de rideau... Même si notre fils a eu quelques difficultés à s'endormir!"[234]

It is quite clear that American Express is targeting something other than e 'popular' audience of the Opéra Bastille.

In the same publication Kiri Te Kanawa endorses Rolex watches and rance Telecom's advertisement contains a photograph of Luca della Robia's *antoria*, visually reminding the reader of opera's renaissance roots. The

Sony publicity is the most revealing of all. Although the Bastille Opéra was now the official venue for opera, Sony's advertisement covers two pages with a photograph of the Palais Garnier with the comment "J'en ai rêvé, Sony l'a fait", thus putting paid to the myth that opera has shed its symbolic roots.

It is evident that most of the advertised goods for purchase in England, France, Italy and Australia fall into the category of 'luxury item'. Cars, watches, steamship and airline companies, fountain pens, alcohols, furs and other apparel as well as selected after-theatre restaurants compete to interest their reader in items which can only be afforded by a very small percentage of the consumer market. In some cases items are directly linked to the event itself, i.e. articles of clothing such as opera hats, opera glasses and fur coats or selected marks of spirits which may be ordered at interval, or recommended places at which to dine. However items concerning travel, credit facilities, etc. appeal simply to an extra-opera usage.[235]

Programmes give the game away in other ways as well. A recent study of programmes designed for schoolchildren at Covent Garden reveals that they require a reading age of 16. Certainly tomorrow's audience is expected to have a high literacy rate and an elevated disposable income.

Programmes also give information about major political events which can take precedence over the performance. In the Covent Garden Programme of *Die Walküre* on 6th May 1935 the following announcement appeared:

> "Arrangements have been made to broadcast H.M. The King's Speech in the Auditorium during the dinner interval at 8 o'clock."[236]

This kind of exceptional information was very much addressed to those who, occupying important positions in the political and social hierarchy, could in a sense assist in both events.

The programme also served as a kind of social *Who's Who*. It advertised upon operatic events which were to take place in the venue and by the inclusion of a list of patrons let others know the tone of the event. The following is a typical example:

"Grand Opera Ball 4th December 1919
The Ball is arranged and organised by Lady Cunard and is under the Patronage

of Princess Bibesco	Lord & Lady Howard de Walden
Duchess of Rutland	Viscount & Viscountess Farness
Duchess of Marlborough	Lord & Lady Ribblesdale
Marquess & Marchioness of Londonderry	Lord & Lady D'Abermen
Marquess & Marchioness of Anglesey	Lady Cunard
Earl and Countess of Ilchester	Lady Randolph Churchill
Countess Curzon of Kedleston	Lady Holten
Earl and Countess Beatty	Mrs Austin Chamberlain

To establish a Fund for the Permanent Foundation of English Opera.
Fancy dress, dominoes or evening dress may be worn."[237]

hey also set out national etiquette as is shown in the programme of *Das Rosenkavalier* of 1st May 1933:

"Opening Night
Before the Opera
God Save the King."[238]

r theatrical traditions as is the case for the production of *Parsifal*, 18th May 933:

"the audience is requested not to applaud until the end of the performance"[239]

r requests by management which might seem inappropriate for any other eatrical venue:

"The management earnestly desire that silence be observed during the performance."[240]

hey also demonstrate that audiences often expected to pay more if royalty ttended the event as we see on 29th May 1935 on the occasion of a ommand performance at which the Duke and Duchess of York were to be resent.

"Wednesday night subscribers may retain their seats and boxes without extra payment."[241]

y the 1970s, the new hierarchy of funding, private, corporate and state, took a life of its own. Pages devoted to funding bodies, sponsors and donors pear in every programme.

Information on etiquette was not only restricted to England. During the ustralian 1907 Royal Grand Opera Season the following appeared in the ogramme:

"Notice - Gentlemen are kindly requested to refrain from smoking in the Foyer, accommodation being provided for that purpose on the Balcony."[242]

In the early part of the century, specially designed grand opera programmes appeared with extravagant colour plates and offering luxury products to their buyers. By the 1940s comparisons were being made between opera in Australia and in Europe and these comments were included in programmes.

Studying playbills is invaluable, telling the reader much about the theatres they advertise and the caste and social expectations of the people attending them. The following table, for example demonstrates the average percentage of space given over to advertising in selective opera programmes and excluding the publication of full libretti.

Company and Country	Corporate Advertising	Promotion and Sponsorship
The Australian Opera	49%	15%
Opera New Zealand	50%	12%
The Metropolitan Opera, United States	58%	18%
The Royal Opera House United Kingdom	39%	10%
Opéra Bastille, France	20%	0

What is interesting in the context of this thesis is that like the theatres which they were designed for they are different from similar artifacts for other events. In general the materials used are more expensive, the colours and typography more dramatic, the products advertised more exclusive and the list of patrons and sponsors taken from the highest echelons of the land. Thus these items, the opera houses and the ways in which people behave, are useful in the quest of trying to discover what the meaning of 'going to the opera' entails.

4.2.2 Conclusion

This section has compared opera houses, their audiences and various political regimes which have endorsed their creation and attendance of certain social groups. In every case there is a remarkable homogeneity of response these variable factors. The symbolic significance of the house appears to

ıave remained broadly the same, its architecture representative of each ;ociety's notions of what is held to be grand whether the house be constructed n Europe or the new world.

Audiences have been compared and it has been shown that if one allows or slight differences in internal etiquette, attendance at the opera is ıccompanied by a remarkable similarity of behaviour and is limited to a small ;roup of participants separated from the rest of society by income and sense ›f social position.

Behaviour at the opera under varying political regimes has been ıvestigated. These ranged from the court of an absolute monarch, to that of ı communist state. Again, the conclusion drawn from the evidence is that here has been little perceptible change in attitudes concerning opera and ehaviour there.

Opera might indeed be said to exude permanence, stability and randness. It bestows a legitimacy on the lifestyles of those attending it, and nhances their lives with its strong sense of continuity and political ignificance. This is equally true for those who attend it frequently, and for ıose who gaze only occasionally upon its monumental buildings. It is still nportant, and still carries the same meaning, for those who for social, political r musical reasons do not participate in the experience itself. It is argued that ıese people are as important in framing the context of the meaning of opera s those who attend and the spectres of those who have laid its ceremonial :ones.

Chapter 5

The Sydney Opera House

An Example of the Creation of National Symbolism

The analysis in the previous chapters has focused upon Europe, and ılthough most concrete examples have been drawn from Britain and France, here has been an implication that this is an indicative picture of what opera neans in virtually every European country. It is now useful to point out that he general hypothesis holds well for some other countries too.

Australia, which in 1988 celebrated 200 years of European settlement, ıas a very much shorter history than France or England. It has not, ·aditionally, provided the 'high arts' in its major centres of population. Yet, emarkably, it was decided in the 1950s that the rapidly growing city of Sydney equired an 'opera house'. A number of questions are raised by the Australian ecision to build an opera house which will help us further to understand the omplexity of the term 'opera'. Indeed by undertaking such a project the overnment of the day chose not only to invest immense public expenditure n a monumental building but the brief specifically stated that it must rival all ther western opera houses. Could it be that Australia had discovered the nportance of 'an opera' or was it to prove, as has been the case with the ɔnstruction of so many monumental opera houses in history, that it was to be n emblem of something more, greater than the performed work and greater ıan the provision of the experience of opera-going for the citizens of south ɜstern Australia?

The Sydney Opera House, its history and in particular its social and ɔlitical context, will be investigated in terms of its particular relationship to the eaning of opera. It is the social and political meanings attributed to the ɔera house which are to be focused upon. These elements, all of which are ;sociated with and signify notions of glory and achievement (i.e. continuous

political support under all governments, religious endorsement, social importance, linguistic continuity and architectural symbolism), have been raised throughout the thesis and are fundamental to an interpretation of the significance of an opera house. They contribute both individually and collectively towards the formation of a coherent and multi-levelled understanding of the greater and real meaning of opera.

As has already been outlined, the opera and thus by extension opera houses, exist primarily because states require venues in which to perform certain ceremonial functions on seemingly neutral or non-political territory. Thus opera once again can be seen to carry an allegorical significance as an instrument serving to endorse the legitimisation of the State's power.

The major factors which form 'the context' of the house fall into two broad groups. These are its social and political function which provides an analysis of why and how it was built, as well as a discussion of the structure: that is an analysis of what distinguishes this building from other entertainment venues. As has been demonstrated earlier, opera houses are built almost exclusively in states when there is a need for a symbolic national statement to support assertions of the state's might. This is expressed very often in the form of a monument in order to demonstrate the uniqueness or ascendance of the state in political, economic or cultural domains. It is the identification of a combination of these factors that great opera houses can realise.[1] Claude Mollard supports such a view:

> "Lyrical art becomes the symbol of the capacity or incapacity of western countries to affirm their cultural identity to the world"[2]

and theatre historian Marvin Carlson builds upon this notion by suggesting that is not only the art, but the total event and the way in which it links into society which draws out its meaning:

> "the meaning of an event depends to some extent upon its context, the way in which it is related to other events and to a cultural milieu."[3]

One could extend this analysis further suggesting that the relationship between opera and the state is a litmus test of what is occurring at any point of time in society. The Sydney Opera House cannot be understood simply as a building, the main interest of which is the uniqueness of its site. Nor can it be explained

simply by the political vision of the period which brought it about, or by the economic resurgence and demographic restructuring of post-war Sydney.

A wider view would be to look at the semiotics of the building. It signifies more than the sum of its parts and has a powerful and coherent language of its own, with signs which convey its meaning. From a less theoretical perspective there are also many who simply measure the effect of the building itself on the outside world. John Cargher, a well known Australian opera critic and author, introduces his chapter 'The Sydney Opera House' in *Opera and Ballet in Australia* with the following comment, establishing the relationship between the 'outer core' and its significance in an international context:

> "Paris has its Eiffel Tower, New York has its Empire State Building and Sydney has its Opera House.
> ...
> Sydney is indeed fortunate in having the Opera House. It has caused the usual surge in theatrical activity which appears in the wake of new centres of the performing arts, but it has also put Sydney and opera in Australia on the map internationally."[4]

A good example of this is the *Sydney Morning Herald's* pictorial article published at the opening of the opera house which simply juxtaposed photographs of Covent Garden, the Paris Opéra, La Scala, the Met and Cologne's opera house with a caption remarking that:

> "The completion of the Sydney Opera House has drawn the attention of a world in which the theatre arts have been traditionally housed in elegant grandeur."[5]

Carlson too provides an analysis which places the context of the experience against an historical background and thus reinforces Cargher's statement:

> "Thus by the second half of the nineteenth century the opera house had become an obligatory monument for any city anywhere in the world wishing to establish its European-oriented cultural credentials. ... The continuing importance of this symbol in the twentieth century may be clearly seen in one of its most striking and controversial modern examples – the Opera House in Sydney, Australia, characterised by its senior engineer as 'a focal point and civic symbol for a city which seeks to destroy once and for all the suggestion that it is a cultural backwater'."[6]

This conceptual context and its associated meanings encompassing the inner' and 'outer' cores and cultural and political relationships are supported and also developed further by John Yeomans, author of the most definitive study of the house, who raises them in the form of a most pertinent question:

> "How then, did such a city become the possessor of an unforgettable palace built not for sports but for the arts, a palace which, whether you like or dislike this or that detail, gives off such an indestructible aura of magnificence that it is hard not to think of it as another Taj Mahal?"[7]

The context of the Sydney Opera House encompasses the political environment and social structure of post-war Sydney and the nature of its great natural asset, a harbour of extraordinary proportions which leads into the very political and financial heart of the city and dominates its landscape. That the most splendid site with a 360° view from land and sea was chosen on which to place this new venue is from the outset most significant.

Post-War Australia and especially Sydney experienced a general boom, most notably economic and demographic.[8] Using more emotive language James Waites describes it in the following manner:

> "Sydney - a new city on the edge of the new world was also unencumbered by the burdens of tradition. Few cities were better placed to embrace the new."[9]

The now conventional and accepted theory that the name 'opera house' s in fact a misnomer for the building requires challenging. This view is based on the fact that from its very outset the specifications for the complex required the construction not only of a theatre in which to house opera, but a drama theatre, and public meeting rooms, a broadcasting centre, film projection provisions, restaurants, and other ancillary services. In fact the initial requirements were clearly set out in the competition specifications:

> *"1. There shall be two halls, one a large hall and one a small. ... The large hall to be designed for use for the following purposes:*
> *(a) Symphony concerts (including organ music) and soloists.*
> *(b) Large scale opera*
> *(c) Ballet and dance*
> *(d) Pageants and mass meetings*
>
> *2. The small hall to be designed for the following purposes:*
> *(a) Dramatic presentations*
> *(b) Intimate opera*
> *(c) Chamber music*
> *(d) Concerts and recitals*
> *(e) Lectures*"[10]

Yeomans refers to these requirements using his interpretation of them to support the view that the Opera House was in fact misnamed:

> "These paragraphs have always seemed to me to be crystal clear. Opera is mentioned, in its place; this place is subordinate, in the major hall, to concerts and in the minor hall to plays. The contest conditions reflected the client's way of life well enough; the client (at this stage the people of Sydney collectively) had no great interest in opera. That was the position in 1956 and it remains the position today."[11]

nd he presents this argument in the following manner:

> "It is the greatest pity that this performing arts centre was ever called an opera house. The name alone has caused a great deal of misunderstanding and quarrelling, for a handful of Sydney opera buffs got it into their heads that the prime role of the building on Bennelong Point was to supply a superb stage able to cope with the grandest of operatic productions. The competition conditions clearly disprove this. But in the perverse way of things, the name 'Opera House' is the one which comes straight to mind to indicate a building with a touch of grandeur."[12]

Yet even Yeomans' lamentations can be seen to support the view opposite to that which he believes to be expressing. He acknowledges but does not appear to realise the significance that a building designed with "grandeur" and for the performance of musical works, will be universally recognised as an opera house and not simply a performing arts centre.

The argument suggested by Yeomans that the term 'opera house' was an accidental misnomer was also maintained by some of those involved in the realisation of the project. When, in 1966 it became apparent that there were to be major difficulties in the presentation of full-scale grand opera at the theatre due to the departure of Utzon and the inability of the consultant architects to devise a new backstage mechanism large enough to hold the machinery required, T.E. Bean, a management consultant for the New South Wales government in his report of 9 January 1967 stated that:

> "It is already canvassed in musical circles abroad that the building in course of construction is *not* an Opera House in the generally accepted sense of the word, so much as a cultural supermarket enclosed by a magnificent shell. This is a criticism of misconception which could be removed overnight by changing the name of the building and, provided that a viable alternative to a dual-purpose hall can be found, attaching the title 'Opera House' to that part of the general complex in which opera can be successfully presented."[13]

The stress made by Bean in his description of "generally accepted sense of the word" is most interesting. One of the core elements of this thesis is the maintenance of the view that the meaning of opera is greater than the literal meaning of the word. It therefore runs counter to the view expounded by Bean that the city of Sydney set out to build "a dual-purpose hall" although that may have been its ultimate function. By naming this structural configuration an opera house, the City of Sydney clearly set out to build a physical representation of the meaning of opera.

Cargher, also supports the classic view that the term 'opera house' is a misnomer, although the argument he sustains throughout his book does encompass an historical understanding of the significance of the word and

supports the notion that concepts of an opera can and should be separated from the opera or opera:

> "On the other hand, the very name OPERA HOUSE has always loomed large in the histories of cities and there must be hundreds all over the world which sport a building so named without ever having had a resident opera company. In the nineteenth century opera was the ultimate in theatrical entertainment and any building which implied by its name that it could be used to present grand opera immediately became the focus of attention."[14]

In terms of the general hypothesis put forward in this thesis these interpretations are rather restrictive. The term 'opera house', an extension of the pluralistic construct of opera, was coined and used deliberately in order for such a radical construction as the Sydney Opera House to gain credibility. No such fantasy of construction would have been conceived to support the elevation of a mere public entertainment house or functional venue for performance which engenders connotations no greater than the services it would provide. Thus its essential meaning which is evoked by the use of the term 'opera house' is not just an accidental or unlucky combination of words which unwittingly misrepresent a physical reality. It is, rather, a reflection of a conceptual construct empowered through language to transmit to those who hear and use the term a plethora of meanings. These denote a wide level of understanding dependent on the position of the individual interpreting them to perceive it from its most simple level of a physical structure for performances, through to that of a venue which proscribes through its physical manifestation, a complex iconography of culture and aspirations.

Thus the theory supported by Bean, Cargher, Smith and Yeomans[15] who represent the bulk of research undertaken in this area) and which appears to be plausible and defensible at a primary level would seem, in terms of the terminology previously developed in this thesis and set against the examples of: a) historical function; b) the application of mental constructs of those who participate in it; and c) the greatest meaning of the term opera, to appear limited. They should not remain uncontested as the accepted interpretation of this particular structure. Despite the conjecture concerning language and terminology this did not affect the meaning of the building to the greater public. The opening of what was commonly known, thought of, and referred to as 'the Opera House' was anticipated by many as a unique event through which the Australian people could witness the rites and ceremony

associated with monarchy. *The Sun* on October 17, 1973 headed its run up to the event with:

> "In just three days Sydney will celebrate the Royal opening of the Opera House with pomp, majesty and ceremony."[16]

The elements of "majesty and ceremony" are fundamental to an understanding of the real reasons for the state to have constructed an opera house and not a multi-purpose concert hall and entertainment venue.

The antecedents of the decision to devise and construct an opera house are fairly simple to trace. In 1947 Eugène Goossens, a musician of Belgian and of British descent with a family history steeped in European musical tradition was appointed conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and director of the New South Wales Conservatorium. At that time Sydney possessed an acoustically poor Town Hall as the only venue available in which to stage classical concerts whilst demand for them was increased due to the expanded level of immigration from Europe. Thus, the idea of building a new structure was borne out of necessity. A venue was clearly needed in which an audience could hear orchestral and operatic works. From this simple requirement grew the scheme for the creation of something more than a hall: an opera house.

By 1948, the use of Bennelong Point which dominates the entrance to the hub of Sydney Harbour, had already been mooted as a potential site for such a venue. The concept of holding an international competition to find a design for such a site was generally accepted. Goossens suggested that:

> "Like the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House, it must furnish a permanent home for our symphony orchestra, opera, ballet and choral festivals. The auditorium must accommodate audiences of from 3500 to 4000 - no fewer."[17]

He developed this idea of 'a great opera house' and brought it to the attention of influential people in Sydney thereby steadily gaining support and consolidating it within a social and political group who had both an interest in and the capacity to realise its creation. Yeomans suggests a possible explanation of how the idea became a reality and eventually took form:

> "...because a London conductor of Belgian descent, determined to lodge the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in a good permanent home, convinced a Labor Party politician that Sydney needed a new cultural and musical centre; the politician became so obsessed with the idea that he pushed it through against all opposition from within his own party or outside it."[18]

By 1952 the concept of an opera house had become general parlance in newspapers and on 8th November 1954, the Premier Mr. John Cahill announced the building of such a venue. He employed from the outset the tone of language which would dominate the discussion about the house in the years to come, introducing notions of pride through public display and democratic political modernity:

> "The opportunities for erecting monumental buildings in Sydney are rare and I agree that while we must be practical, the Opera House must be something that the people of this city and the State can be proud of."[19]

Both civic and national pride were firmly equated from this point as a stated aim bearing the mark of government's endorsement of the project. Therefore it can clearly be said that the opera house, from its conceptual beginnings, was to represent something more than simply a building in which musical activities would be housed.

The site for the opera house was decided by the New South Wales Cabinet in 1955 and on 13th September of that year an international competition for the design of the building was announced. Thus, the construction of a monument epitomising the ideals of the new post-war Australia was ensured. An opera house would crown the entrance to its harbour and put Sydney on the international map. And for that honour international architects were invited to compete so that Sydney harbour would be recognised not only by its population but across distant seas. The closing date of the competition was set for 3rd December 1956 and the announcement made on 18th January 1957.

Australia, represented by the city of Melbourne, had been spotlit in the international arena for most of the year 1956 as the Olympic Games were held here. Sydney was keen to gain international recognition in the eyes of the world and this is normally achieved by erecting noteworthy buildings. A wealthy economy provides facilities for its population to use and others to marvel at.

The naming of Joern Utzon as winner of the international competition with project which was very much an inspired interpretation of the notion of an opera House, proved to be most controversial. In fact many of the engineering skills and actual modes of realisation of the scheme were to

provide Sydney with an obsession with the creation of a vision which would dominate the entrance of the harbour for many years. John Yeomans demonstrates the fantastic nature of the whole project. He describes the eventual resignation of Utzon on 28th February 1966 as being a direct consequence of the unrealistic and apparent reliance on faith and a shared dream which all those involved in the definition of the project had shared:

> "No architect would resign when he was supervising the construction of his design for one of the great buildings of this century. For that matter, it could surely never come about that a building first estimated to cost seven million Australian dollars would finally come to cost a hundred million. And no committee of distinguished (and in two cases famous) architects would award first prize in an international design competition to a handful of sketches indicating only some first thoughts about a building obviously crammed with unsolved problems of function. No celebrated firm of structural engineers would agree to work on a building which was begun before anybody knew whether it was possible to construct the roof. No hard-headed, electorally-chosen government would in its wildest moments order a start to be made upon a building when it had no idea how much it would cost or when it would be finished."[20]

And yet comments by individuals involved in those heady, early days seem to agree that this is exactly what happened. Professor Henry Ingham Ashworth, at that time Professor of Architecture at the University of Sydney and one of the committee's judges comments, on the first meeting held in the Sydney Public Library on 30th November 1954, which was convened by Premier Cahill:

> "to announce the appointment of a committee to advise the government on ways and means of building 'an opera house'."[21]

n his recollections of the atmosphere of the time wrote:

> "Sometimes I think about the beginning of the story, too. When I look back on it, do you know I often think what an extraordinary beginning it had, with that first meeting in the Public Library where five men were told to go ahead and build a huge complicated thing like an Opera House? There we were, just five men with no money allocated and no plans and nobody with any idea where the funds were to come from. All we had was just an instruction to build an Opera House. There can't be too many countries where a thing like *that* could happen."[22]

s Ashworth notes that not only was the architectural dimension based on magination and fantasy but so too were ideas for the funding of such a project nd the estimated time of construction.

The engineers Arup and Zunz point out that the assessor's report stated at the plans were based on an inspired vision, a faith in the nature and eaning of an opera house:

> "The drawings submitted for the scheme were simple to the point of being diagrammatic. Nevertheless we have returned again and again to the study of these drawings and we are convinced that they present a concept of an opera house which is capable of becoming one of the great buildings of the world."[23]

The building was due for completion on a significant national date, Australia Day 1963, which marked the 175th anniversary of European settlement. The construction of a monumental opera house surely would be the quintessential representation of European culture. So too, when the project was to run well over its anticipated completion date and cost estimations, was the opera house to follow the traditional path of opera house construction. The Palais Garnier took twenty years to complete and its costs far exceeded estimates. Later in the century this rule was to be proven again at the Opéra Bastille which as de Saint Pulgent notes overran its budget by 80 per cent in a seven year period:

> "Mais le plus surprenant est que nos impitoyable calculateurs oublient tous leurs principes lorsqu'ils passent à l'évaluation du prix de la nouvelle salle. Ainsi le coût de cet investissement est évalué sans aucune justification à 300 millions de francs 1977, alors que l'Opéra-Bastille aura finalement coûté 3 milliards de francs 1984: la sous-estimation en francs constants est de plus de 80%."[24]

Thus James Waites' comment in the programme of *The Eighth Wonder* in 1995, which implies that this project would not have been undertaken if the fiscal and human realities were known, is curious in the light of these examples. He stated that:

> "Had those in charge been able to calculate in advance the final cost of the buildings in both financial and human terms, it is unlikely that even those drawn to Utzon's vision would have given it the go ahead."[25]

On the contrary, it could be argued that because it perfectly understood Opera's real significance, the Australian government deliberately turned a blind eye to the real costs. No one will forget Cahill and his vision, even more so because of the extraordinary nature of the building. In omitting to accurately cost the building or estimate the time needed for its construction the Cahill Government was doing what government has always done, making sure that the construction of monumental architecture is funded by governments whatever the long-term costs might be.

The basis of the costing was underpinned by broad assertions from politicians and supporters of the project that the money would be found and when this became a necessity the creative ways proposed in which to fund the project were almost as remarkable as the project itself. The first solution was

to generate a new source of income, a scheme later taken up by the Major administration in England from which the Royal Opera has been at the time of writing (1996) one of the major recipients. A national lottery was set up on 1 May 1957 with the winner gaining £100,000. The rationale for this was that state funds would not be seen to be diverted from projects of public necessity. One classic form of funding was resorted to as members of the business community were approached fairly publicly for donations, although this form of funding has consistently proved an unreliable measure as pledges made publicly and in the heat of the moment are often left unfulfilled or unsustainable for the duration of the life of a public project.[26] A more curious funding method (calling to mind a practice at the Paris Opéra in the 19th century), was that people paid large sums to kiss celebrities. Yeomans describes this event vividly:

> "The first formal appeal for money for the Opera House was made at a public meeting in the Sydney Town Hall right back on 7 August 1957. At this meeting Mr Cahill handed the Opera House Committee a State Government cheque for £200,000. Various citizens in the hall pledged donations and, ... various distinguished ladies then began selling kisses to raise money. The kissing was done in the Lord Mayor's reception room where Erik Andersson paid £100 for the right to implant a chaste kiss on the cheek of the massive golf-playing soprano, Miss Joan Hammond. Utzon paid £100 for the right to kiss the flautist Elaine Shaffer, and also the wife of the violinist Ruggiero Ricci, who was then touring Australia as a celebrity artist. The then Lord Mayor, Alderman Harry Jensen (nicknamed Handsome Harry) suddenly announced that the leader of the State Parliament Opposition, Mr P.H. Morton, had paid 15 guineas for the right to kiss him."[27]

These erratic sources of revenue and imaginative funding devices reflected in part the non-conventional manner in which the project was conceived. Peter Hall, the architect who eventually assumed responsibility for the project, uses evocative imagery to describe the nature of government funding methods in his recollections of this period. Writing in July 1972 in one of only two newsletters published under a series entitled *Progress at the Opera House* he states that:

> "The Sydney Opera House is a remarkable phenomenon on the Australian scene. It is remarkable that it should have happened at all, that it happened in the way it did, in the fashion of *Alice in Wonderland*, and that it should have attempted and achieved such high standards of quality in practically all respects, in a country not yet (for good and understandable reasons) noted for such aspirations."[28]

Thus the project of the Sydney Opera House was nurtured and finally launched representing the embodiment of the mixed and often conflicting needs of the emergence of a coherent national symbol.

At the Ceremony to Commemorate the Commencement of the Building of the Sydney Opera House held on 2nd March 1959, the Hon. J.J. Cahill, M.L.A., Premier of the State of New South Wales made the following comments to support his government's endorsement of the project. In so doing Cahill identified the project as the outcome of his political party's endeavours, bestowing on it, and by extension the City of Sydney, an international status.

> "The proposal to build the Sydney Opera House and the proof we have given of our determination to see the project through to finality, have focused the eyes of the world upon us."[29]

He then gave depth to this analysis through the development of an historical and cultural context in order to strengthen the image, finally linking these again with his party's political rhetoric and objectives:

> "The nations of the past have each contributed something to the accumulation of those arts which spring from the soul and mind, and form such an essential part of any great civilisation.
>
> We have something to contribute also, and my Government is convinced that Australia is worthy of a building in which our contribution to the music of the world can be fittingly demonstrated."[30]

The notions of the 'Glory Model'[31] established, Cahill suggested that as a representative of the new world, Australia should introduce these formally recognisable structures and combine them with the trappings of political and ecclesiastical symbolism to herald a new age and cultural domain:

> "Such a building will be the Sydney Opera House and it will stand not merely as an outstanding example of modern architecture or even as a world famous opera house, but as a shrine in which the great artists of the world may be seen and heard and our own artists may display the flowering of Australian culture."[32]

Mr. Cahill who was leader of the political left, made it clear that he was not betraying party principles. This opera house, designed not only to display the greatness of the nascent civilisation was also to have a policy steeped in his party's political traditions, providing access for all members of society. This language is similar to the statements of François Mitterrand's socialist government when the proposal for a new opera house was first mooted in Paris in the 1980s. The term 'a people's opera' was coined and a site chosen

to endorse this even though in reality it has not changed its meaning or accessibility to the general public. The use of such language enabled Cahill to duck the more obvious jibes of supporting 'élitism' but still allow his government to create a "monument" which would be seen to represent the greatness of the nation and its exploits:

> "...the building when erected will be available to the use of every citizen, that the average working family will be able to afford to go there just as well as people in more favourable economic circumstances, that there will be nothing savouring even remotely of a class conscious barrier and that the Opera House will, in fact, be a monument to democratic nationhood in its fullest sense."[33]

The Commencement Ceremony served the function of a mediating forum within which all members of the political community were publicly united in support for the project. The uniformity of support evidenced by the language used at this event is significant in the general context of this thesis. At its outset, no political representative dared verbalise opposition to the creation of a state emblem and they all had to be seen to support it from the first. H.F. Jensen, the Lord Mayor of Sydney wrote that:

> "I am sure that all citizens will be proud, as I am, that in prospect a magnificent structure will soon appear to add dignity and attractiveness to the skyline, and provide another dominant feature to the Harbour Gateway of Sydney.
> ...
> The functional character of the structure with it sculptural and utilitarian purpose, adds to the stature of the Mother City of the Commonwealth, and will provide the citizens with an incomparable venue for the appreciation of music and the arts."[34]

Thus by reinforcing notions of national pride through a monumental building, linking it to the outside world and only lastly stating its value in terms of its function, his emphasis is clear: his priorities are firstly political and only incidentally cultural.

Davis Hughes, Leader of the New South Wales Country Party (a conservative party which represented non-urban interests) highlighted its symbolic value over its functional significance:

> "...It will be not merely a striking landmark on the shores of Sydney Harbour, but also a symbol that our cultural thought is keeping pace with national expansion."[35]

P.H. Morton, Leader of the State Opposition, the Liberal Party (a conservative party) concurred with this view:

> "...It has attracted wide interest overseas and greatly enhanced our cultural standing."[36]

and finally, Charles Moses, General Manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission proudly linked visions of the state and culture:

> "success in persuading people that an opera house was not only desirable but essential to the State's cultural growth."[37]

National representatives of the fine arts were also enlisted to endorse the project. H. Ingham Ashworth, Professor of Architecture at the University of Sydney; Sir Bernard Heinze, Director, State Conservatorium of Music; Hugh Hunt, Executive Director of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust; Robert Quention, Director of the School of Dramatic Art; and Ernest Llewellyn, Leader of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, as well as the architect of the project Joern Utzon, had idealistic and supportive comments published in the commemorative programme. There are also token representations from the 'artistic' community: John Alden, an actor, and Gladys Moncrieff, then Australia's greatest living soprano.

In addition to the statements from Australia's political parties, intelligentsia and artistic community, comments were included from leading international papers all of which support the project and endorse its significance.

That Sydney was to have a splendid opera house and that it needed a visual symbol to crown its harbour was a generally accepted notion by the end of the 1950s. The question of 'what did an opera house mean to Sydney' was the focus of so much compounded rhetoric that criticism of the concept was virtually non-existent and tantamount to temporal sacrilege. Consensus was such that before its opening the building was acclaimed by all. The following reference reflects language and symbols consistent with almost all writing about the Opera House in late 1973:

> "Make no mistake – this birth, this Opera house, is not just a thing of stone and glass created by computers. It is a pyramid, a temple, reflecting in its multifaceted complexity the subconscious will to greater self-expression by our people at this era in our history.
>
> As a nation we come more vividly alive as this strange jewel glows complete."[38]

Thus the symbol for the Olympic Games, which will be held in Sydney in the year 2000, is to be the Opera House, giving this statement unusual potency within a very short space of time.

Controversy did however befall the Opera House on many levels although its symbolic importance was never disputed. The change of government in

1965, from Labor (left) to Liberal (right), brought about in part by "the issue of escalating costs of the building"[39] meant that its cost was scrutinised publicly. It was deemed to be a reflection of the folly of the Labor government's economic policy. In this context it is not suprising that the optimism concerning its funding, which had been founded on little more than inspiration, was called into question. The resignation of Utzon in 1966 provoked to a large extent by the new government's emphasis on realistic projections of cost and design, provided the opportunity for the entire project to be reassessed.

When on 20th October 1973, the Sydney Opera House was officially opened by HM Queen Elizabeth II, the language she employed to describe it was not significantly different to those laudatory statements made by politicians and their supporters sixteen years previously, except for the inclusion of a reference to the controversy surrounding its actual construction. In her speech, the Queen likens the opera house to monuments of greater symbolic significance than The Taj Mahal investing it with connotations directly linked to one of the kernels of civilisation which in the 19th century so awed the British public and its imperialist ethos: the Pyramids.

> "Controversy of the most extreme kind attended the building of the Pyramids, yet they stand today - 4,000 years later, acknowledged one of the wonders of the world.
>
> So I hope and believe it will be with the Sydney Opera House."[40]

The Queen, endorsing the iconographic references of the building, said:

> "To express itself fully, the human spirit must sometimes take wings - or sails - and create something which is not just utilitarian and commonplace."[41]

The new Australia of 1973 may have been nurturing democratic precepts of nationhood as expressed as early as 1954 by the NSW Premier, but its symbolic framework could not afford to openly take these on without the assurance of a progression of cultural heritage accompanied by an expression of the cultural and social development of the modern state. The historical and cultural rôle which Great Britain played in the birth of the Australian nation and its modest beginnings as a penal colony for Britain, were also stressed by the monarch in a statement which could be interpreted as a reminder to the colony that although its economic future appeared healthy and that in all probability would imply a movement towards independent nationhood, its cultural roots were drawn from a British inheritance and that this would not, and could not,

be forgotten or displaced. Thus the following seemingly simple historical reference made by the Queen is loaded with political associations and contains a reminder of the continued relationship of domination, albeit cultural and historical, of one power over another.

> "You have reminded us, Mr. Premier, that this site is not only the birthplace of the nation, but also where the first European dramatic performance ever to take place in Australia was started. In a mud hut.
> This interest in the arts has been a characteristic of the people who settled in Australia ever since. The progression from the mud hut to soaring opera house reflects the continuing cultural development as well as the tremendous economic achievement which made it possible."[42]

The editorial of *The Sydney Morning Herald* concurs with the spirit of the Queen's speech. It endorsed the rhetoric she employed:

> "The Opera House ... has a national significance as an aspiration, a symbol and an achievement; and it is appropriate that it should be opened by the Queen of Australia. Her presence here today carries its own symbolic significance: in her person and her great office she reminds us of our origins and cultural heritage; the duty which she will perform at the Opera House acknowledges its importance as a measure of national growth and achievement.
> ...
> From the beginning the Opera House was seen not simply as a home for indigenous arts but as a contribution to international culture, in which Australia, by right of maturity should participate.
> ...
> Today is a time for Sydney pride in a majestic ornament, a work of art in its own right, which is already, through its magnetic presence, focusing attention on the arts and stimulating support for our artists. More than that, it is a time - emphasised by the Queen's presence - for national pride in its acknowledgement that our artistic culture, while exploiting what is unique in Australian experience, nevertheless finds its importance and its aspiration as part of the international culture, with its differing traditions and cross-fertilisation. Those great sails ... are symbolic in many ways, but that is their profoundest and most exciting meaning."[43]

The *Sun Herald* the following day in more graphic language told a similar story spelling out order, continuity, tradition, achievement and anticipation of future glories:

> "Yesterday was Sydney's greatest day of pomp and majesty since human kind first set foot on these shores. Heaven, the Queen and the Government did all they could to make it so.
> ...
> The Royal presence symbolised the peak of recognition. Few Governments and peoples every enjoy such happy triumphs devoted to celebrating the completion of a beautiful building..."
> ...
> Yesterday was unique, superbly perfect. A Royal day with longed-for blue skies. The Opera House flashed white, a bride ready."[44]

On this same day another significant speech was made from the very sails of the Opera House roof, this time in the form of a tribute to the

Aboriginal cultural inheritance. A cynical interpretation of this most theatrical event might be that this 'poem' was an attempt to 'outdo the pyramids', a demonstration that 40,000 years of continuous history would certainly provide cultural longevity and outstrip claims of cultural ascendance from the rest of the world. The speech, delivered by Ben Blakeney, an aboriginal actor, from the top of one of the Opera House's sails epitomises the rhetoric of the cultural propaganda in terms which link the site and culture with operatic metaphors of rite, chant, dance and percussion:

> "I am Bennelong
> 200 years ago fires burned on this point –
> The fires of my people –
> And into the light of the flames
> From the shadows all about –
> Our warriors danced.
>
> Here my people chanted
> Their stories of the Dreamtime – of spirit heroes
> And of earth's creation
> And our painted bodies flowed in ceremony
>
> On this point my people laughed –
> And they sang
> While the sticks clacked
> In the rhythm of the corroborees.
>
> And then came the great canoes floating
> With white clouds above them –
> Our children watched and our lubras grew large eyed –
> And our painted men danced
> Among the fires.
>
> I am Bennelong –
> And my spirit
> And the spirit of my people ... lives –
> And their dance –
> Their music and their drama
> And their laughter also remains."[45]

Interestingly the site of the Opera House, now named 'Bennelong Point' was where Bennelong, the first aborigine to adopt western culture, had lived in the early days of the colony. The irony inherent in this was not left unobserved as only days earlier the Queen had been greeted in Canberra by Aboriginal Protesters who, only recently enfranchised and politicised in a western sense, claimed "recognition of tribal rights to land",[46] thus representing the opening of a new and important debate concerning ownership and colonization.

Although the Opera House had been opened by the head of state and the 'spirit' of the indigenous population, the religious powers that be could not let such an occasion go by without some form of manifestation. This occurred in the form of a multi-denominational religious service encompassing thirty-three different national groups. The *Daily Mirror* reported the occasion thus:

> "The service will be called The Family of Man, and those attending will include ministers from different denominations, choirs from the Great Synagogue and traditional dancers from Europe and the Pacific. ...
> Television personalities ... will also take part in the address. ...
> Sir Asher Joel, Chairman of the Sydney Opera House Official Opening Committee, will read the address."[47]

This interdenominational celebration however did lack one representative, interestingly enough the Queen's. As there is no separation of church and state in Anglicanism this refusal further aligned power with the monarch as its only and highest representative.

> "The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney (Most Rev. M.L. Loane) has declined an invitation to attend an inter-faith religious service to celebrate the opening of the Sydney Opera House.
> ...
> A Statement by the diocesan secretary ... said: 'The diocese has a principle of not sharing in religious services which are not specifically Christian services, and therefore the standing committee of the diocese has resolved not to participate in this particular service."[48]

Thus the state headed by the Queen endorsed the project and so had most of the country's religious representatives. It was now for the cultural arena to perform.

One fundamental truism concerning the opening of opera houses is that the operatic event itself, the primary meaning of an opera is generally non-existent. The Opera House was opened with an extraordinary spectacle using its shell-like walls as a backdrop but this was not an opera but rather an agglomeration of symphonic works put together for the day. This is not an unusual occurrence and in itself has much historic precedent. At the opening performances of the Palais Garnier and the Opéra Bastille in Paris, or at the reopening of Covent Garden after World War II, no opera was performed either. This lends weight in the form of concrete example, to the argument that the true meaning of opera is other than the performance of an operatic work. The opening of the Sydney Opera House proved no exception to this

rule. Thus it is not fundamentally surprising that Vincent Smith wrote of the opening:

> "The performance was not great but it improved as it continued. But the 2700 invitees were generally more concerned with being there to see the glitter and glamour than they were with musical excellence."[49]

His comment expresses an accepted understanding of the meaning of the opera. The performance of an opera being merely an ancillary act.

In 1974 an article in the *Canberra Times* reflecting upon this was entitled "Opening of Opera House a musical non-event".[50] It went on to describe what kind of event it really was:

> "One of the surprising features of last year's opening of the Sydney Opera House was the scant attention it received in the world musical press.
>
> After the years of building and its astronomical cost which made it the world's most expensive building devoted principally to the musical arts, one would have expected its eventual opening to have at least equalled the interest occasioned throughout the world by [other buildings]. But such was not the case.
>
> ...
>
> The Sydney Opera House might be 'the greatest building of this century', but so far as the world musical Press was concerned its opening was the greatest non-event in 1973."[51]

It could be argued that the writer has failed to identify the central problem. The musical world's lack of interest in the Opera House would remain consistent with the view that the opera house represents something other than musical concerns. If the house were to produce exceptional words of high musical quality there would certainly be no cause for complaint and this undoubtedly could be perceived as a bonus, but it is clearly not the intention of the political and social forces that this need be its major performed function. Thus this appeal can largely be regarded as not actually being very pertinent to the meaning of the construction and opening of an opera house.

An article in *The Bulletin* in October, 1973 argued that political requirements reigned supreme at the opening:

> "Culture took a back seat.
>
> THE OPENING day of the Sydney Opera House was designed to be a people's carnival. It was also - not, perhaps by design - a political exercise. It was not a cultural one."[52]

The opening of the opera house was interpreted as being a symbolic political ceremony. There would appear to be some reluctance on the part of the journalist, who having identified the fundamental truth of the "exercise" does not commit himself to the theory that this outcome was the intention of the

state. Having stated the case he shies away from developing it although he had in his possession some very powerful material:

> "Our Bob - NSW Premier Sir Robert Askin, who has just announced an election three weeks away - must have done very nicely out of the day. Despite the fact that back in the dreamtime when Bennelong Point was a tramshed and the Opera House a Labor Premier's vision a certain Mr Robin Askin MLA had protested against making this big outlay on culture while some of his constituents were living in chook sheds.
>
> Culture, the ostensible raison d'être of the exercise did very shabbily out of the day. Joan Hammond, the great singing star who made one of the first contributions to the Opera House Fund back in 1957, was not invited to the celebrations. Nor was Nobel prizewinner Patrick White. Nor were dozens of actors, playwrights, singers, artists who will - have already - put breath into that beautiful inert body.
>
> But every politician was, every civic dignitary, every heavyweight from the armed services and the business community and the Boy Scouts..."[53]

The term 'culture' can be interpreted in many ways. The following example from *The Sun* on 23rd October 1973 reveals yet another phenomenon which permeated the national consciousness. It is hard to say where the most significant attraction was. Television was introduced to Australia in the 1950s, that is to say roughly when the need for an opera house was first mooted. It could be seen as an accident of history that the next revolution in television occurred concurrently with the opening of the Opera House. In terms of impact, television certainly 'entertains'. The question is what does the Opera House represent?

> "Biggest crowd in town yesterday was at the Opera House Information Centre in Martin Plaza. They were watching a rerun of the TV coverage of the opening. But this one was in colour. It runs all day every day this week. And it's marvellous."[54]

It has so far been established that the general context in which the Sydney Opera House can be perceived has political, religious and social roots. An opera house is an expression by one civilisation interpreting and demonstrating its self image. The context of the Opera House can thus be seen to encapsulate through an analysis of the language of those involved in its creation as well as critics of the time, the heterogeneous nature of a state striving for a physical as well as a non-physical representation of a new national image. This is achieved by the incorporation of images evoking the great' elements of its British and aboriginal past, giving it historical credence. The effect in turn of the opera on society is also of interest within the context of this study.

Discussion of the Sydney Opera House will now turn to the rôle of the building itself. Marvin Carlson suggests that if one accepts that the creation of an opera house is an event in itself, then analysis of an opera house could be widened to incorporate the following areas:

> "The study of this dimension of the theatre experience necessarily takes us outside ... the confines of the opera house to consider such matters as the relation of a visit to the opera to the rest of life – how it fits into the social routine, where the opera house is located in the urban plan and how one arrives there, what preparations must be made for the operatic event on the part of the public or on that of the performers and management, and so on."[55]

It has been suggested in chapter 4 concerning the experience of 'going to' and 'being at' the opera that by performing certain acts special meaning is attributed to the building. Certainly the preparation involved in going to the event is an important factor contributing to an understanding of the event itself. The purchasing of a title of access, mode of transport, and dress worn, are major factors in this preparation. It is also important to look at the significance these activities have on the immediate social environment occurring around the house. Notions of access are as important as access itself. So too are notions of dress. It is plausible that anyone may be able to purchase a ticket to attend a performance at the opera house and theoretically that person could wear any attire to that performance, but in reality is this the case? Is there a pre-selection process based on a larger concept of the meaning of the opera?

A good way to observe the experience of opera-going is by looking at the clothing people wear when they are there. The difference between the nature of the experience could be demonstrated simply by an examination of the clothing worn to a sports or rock music event compared with that of attendance at the opera. A case in point is that when the first acoustic test of the Concert Theatre at the Sydney Opera House was performed to an audience comprising mainly construction workers from the site, that the dress the workers wore was seen as worthy of comment:

> "So, on the Sunday afternoon crowds of *well-dressed* workers and their sunburned husbands began arriving on the site."[56] (my italics)

Workers do not form the substantial part of a typical opera audience anywhere in the world as was demonstrated in Chapter 4.2.1. Yet this audience chose to imitate the behavioural standards of a typical opera audience. The implication of such a statement may be obvious in terms of an

analysis of the behaviour of those who attend performances but it is well worth stating: when visiting a house of such significance, ordinary clothing is not deemed to be suitable attire in the minds of those who attend.

There is little doubt that the opening of the Opera House proved an occasion for many to display finery. The notion of opera dress was identified clearly by Gary Hughes in the Melbourne *Herald*.

> "$1400 for an opera gown.
> The big question in Sydney's high society at the moment is what to wear to the Royal opening of the Opera House later this month.
> ...
> And some of the women have bought as many as six gowns to last them through the opening season..."[57]

This article goes on however to promote notions of access for all in a backhanded manner. As the Opera House policy was access for all, perhaps gowns and evening dress were not to be strictly *de rigueur*. It would be up to the individual to tailor their dress according to their image of the house.

> "Although the royal opening will be a strictly formal affair, standards of dress at regular night performances are not so uniform.
> As far as the Opera House is concerned there is no standard of dress patrons must conform to. 'As long as someone has tickets they can get in' one attendant said."[58]

The reality of seemingly self-regulated dress codes fooled no-one however. The public wore what they thought their peers, fashion and European convention dictated:

> "The Opera House was the best thing that ever happened to Australian fashion, Countess d'Espinay added.
> 'Jeans are finished' she said. The Opera House is going to make women wear the long dress much more."[59]

For others it was a moment when adherence to convention, however removed from everyday behaviour, was to be respected. The following example highlights the sort of exceptional behaviour which occurred at this time.

> "Member of the cast got a cab ... to the Opera House. She raised no objection when cabbie asked if he could pick up two other women who were going there, too. The women though, were agitated about time. 'It's all right,' said member of the cast, 'we'll be there by 7.15. You'll get in in time.' Women remained agitated. One lifted a package. It was her husband's evening suit. He was already at the Opera House waiting for her to get it to him."[60]

This change of dress behaviour had effects in the manufacturing and design industry as well:

"Hope it won't take another 'Opera House Event' to spur manufacturers on towards yet better designs for evening [wear] later on."[61]

These examples illustrate that whatever fine rhetorical statements may be made by government, the way in which people related to the Opera House was largely influenced by an inherited and shared set of values concerning behaviour, presentation and etiquette.

On entering the house the audience also took on the rôle of performers by playing out social scenarios familiar to many European opera houses for many decades:

"Overheard at the Opera House during intermission: 'Oh yes, they're singing very well. You can actually hear them above the conversations.'"[62]

The festive atmosphere of celebration of high culture was not simply contained inside and outside the direct vicinity of the house. Social occasions were created in honour of the event thus taking on an even further extended meaning of opera. This is an interesting phenomenon where a created event replicates another construct. Questions of art imitating life imitating art, spring at once to mind. The following article from the social pages of the *Sun-Herald* illustrates the kind of event which the opening of the Opera House engendered.

"Grand Ball
Opera fever became international on a grand scale, at the Opera Foundation and Opera Auditions Ball...
... the 'official party' was very glittering. Star of it was Madame Marcos, wife of the President of the Philippines – taller than expected, regal, skin like a pearl, beautiful and cool. ...Madame Pierre Schlumberger looked gorgeous... Mrs Henry Ford II looked charming... Princess Gaeta Pallavicini ... was a stunner... The Duke and Duchess (in silvery salmon) of Bedford spread their always successful charm."[63]

Clearly the language of this text focuses on adjectives such as "glittering", "regal", "gorgeous" and traditional colours associated with operatic language.

Of course, the gap between official policy of accessibility and the reality of the tokenism of this situation did not escape all, as is evidenced by the following contribution by a reader of *The Daily Telegraph* on 25th September 1973 to Sir Asher Joel, Chairman of the Opera House Opening Committee entitled 'An Opera House Plea'.

"Oh Sir Asher, dear Sir Asher, you really are a smasher. For offering 2000 tickets free. For the likes of humble me ... For weeks I've willed a miracle, while others have been cynical. And here it's come at last, the chance to be inside those great white shining shells; To see the Queen and all those swells. So won't you dear Sir Asher, won't you PLEASE?"[64]

It is worth reiterating here elements from the speech made by Premier Cahill at the Commencement Ceremony in 1959: "there will be nothing savouring even remotely of a class conscious barrier and that the Opera House will, in fact, be a monument to democratic nationhood in its fullest sense". Whatever the tone of political rhetoric, it can clearly be seen that the Opera House remained a place where accessibility is still determined by the codes which, although not dictated, are understood, around which other events occur and where even basic requirements such as the taking of refreshments are steeped in notions of exclusivity:

> "It's full sail ahead at the Opera House now and everybody is looking for places nearby to eat before and after the performances.
>
> Naturally, there's the Bennelong itself, exotic and beautiful with a high-flying menu and classical music."[65]

Finally, and perhaps most plainly the following account of the first performance to be held at the concert hall effectively demonstrates the relationship between the opera house and the ritualistic functions of state headed by the Queen in her dual rôle as Queen of Australia and Head of the Church of England:

> "Although only six bars of *God Save the Queen* is protocol for a governor in Australia, the whole anthem was played to open the test concert so that acousticians could record plenty of the tremendous crescendoes on the drums which, if the truth be told, most people of British ancestry in the audience found a little eye-misting."[66]

British ancestry and regal symbolism, although clearly diminishing with the significant influx of post-war immigration, still provided a dominant sense of identification and meaning in the house. The fact is that musical performances, to a large extent supported by those of European backgrounds with a greater cultural relationship and affiliation with the actual performance of opera, took on only a secondary meaning in the state-led iconographic demonstration of the day. Furthermore, the connection between church and state were clearly identified by Leslie Watford:

> "Yesterday was Sydney's greatest day of pomp and majesty since humankind first set foot on these shores. Heaven, the Queen and the Government did all they could do to make it so."[67]

More recently, "Heaven, the Queen and Government" have taken second place to comparisons of mythological status. The Opera House has taken on a meaning of its own, equated no longer to the Taj Mahal or even the Pyramids,

but to the mysteries of Aztec sanctuaries and temples. This transformation from monumental state architecture to cultural icon is even more remarkable given the relatively short period of time it has taken to create such symbolism. The source of this thinking lies in the kind of language used by the consulting engineers. Writing in the 1960s, Ove Arup describes the project in the following terms:

> "The concept, design and construction of the Sydney Opera House stand as an affirmation of 20th century man - that by his imagination and by his own hand he can shape his world to his needs"[68].

and James Semple Kerr who devised an interim plan for the conservation of the building also sees it as much more than an agglomeration of building materials. He states that:

> "The Sydney Opera House is a national icon of exceptional significance, built, maintained and adapted with public money by the Government of NSW on behalf of the people. Its continued function is subsidised directly and indirectly from both State and Commonwealth sources"[69]

and attributes the significance of the Sydney Opera House to what he identifies as being:

> "its almost mythological status as a cultural icon arising from ... the high public interest in its protracted and controversial development; and from its power to attract artists, patrons and tourists on a national and international significance."[70]

This argument resembles so closely those arguments used by European governments to justify opera since its very beginnings. It has already been demonstrated that in France the *privilèges* of Louis XIV, the statements by Rousseau, the justifications by Le Roux and Bonet de Treiches and later Dr Véron, all sought to justify opera's usefulness in terms of its power to attract the influential population within the country and act as a prestigious symbol of France to other countries. In England more recently it has been demonstrated that the justification by opera managers such as Ebers, Lumley and Beecham endorsed opera for its power of attraction to its particular audience and to foreigners and that the Arts Council has determined that "opera should not be let down". Now Sydney, Australia, with its new monumental opera house could also compete with those great and older European powers on the same terms.

There has been, however, a novel addition to this repertory of monumental symbolism and that is the performance of *The Eighth Wonder* which its programme grandly declares had its World première on 14th October

1995. This work, commissioned with funding assistance from the Sydney Opera Trust, is the first opera written about the opera house that it was to be performed in. It details the history of the house, romanticising the metaphorical themes it develops, fusing the notion of the opera house with that of Aztec temples and the political battles with a righteousness resembling religious fervour. Utzon is portrayed as a god-like mystic, misunderstood and maligned, his vision thwarted. Whatever the truth behind the story of the construction of the house the interesting factor is that this 'opera' was written and performed at all. It could be argued that not content with an opera house, the Opera Trust, Australia Council and the government wanted to get its message of cultural coming of age and ascendance across to the world in an operatic statement.

There will however always be those critics who maintain that it is 'an opera' which always gives 'opera' and opera houses their significance and meaning. The well known arts journalist, Maria Pererauer, writing in *The Bulletin* in 1995 gives a traditional evaluation of the meaning of an opera by suggesting that the Sydney Opera House does not live up to that which it had been created to do:

> "...The Sydney Opera House is not an opera house; the city's one true opera house presents musicals, and the other states have opera houses and call them something else"[71]

The present writer's thesis, <u>contra</u> Pererauer, is of course that whatever is performed within the walls of the Sydney Opera House, it is first and foremost fulfilling the function of being the monumental opera house of Australia. The works performed in its auditorium bear little consequence to the constructs which this vision of sheer white sails represent.

On the basis of the weighty commentary about the house since it was first mooted, it is undeniable that the Sydney Opera House has been identified as a building containing many elements which serve to endorse it as a powerful symbol representing the Australian nation. Yeomans comments that:

> "It is fair to say that the Opera House is the only Australian building known outside Australia; the profile of its famous roofs seem to have become some new sort of national symbol overseas. No public building in the world looks like the Sydney Opera House..."[72]

Its construction has made inroads into political and social elements of the Australian lifestyle by the creation of a new venue which dictated a change of fashion, a reason for celebration and ultimately became a metaphor for achievement and modernity. This symbol is now being carried forward into the next century as the sails of the Opera House were used as the symbol for the Sydney Olympic Bid for the year 2000. Illuminated at 4.30 a.m. when the decision was announced by the Olympic Selection Committee, in Cannes, France, with the Olympic colours to display signs of victory, as laser images of congratulations were emblazoned on the stark shells, they shone out to the world as an image of national uniqueness. This is perhaps the most powerful meaning of all for the Sydney Opera House, an immediately identifiable image of modernity bringing together architecture, engineering and an extraordinary natural site as the pinnacle of cultural ascendance.

In this chapter, it has been shown that an opera house in the language of state and society represents a vision of a state on a platform technically removed from the seat of power both secular and religious by employing the iconography of both on a seemingly neutral site. Thus the Sydney Opera House can be viewed as virtually a prototype model containing all the traditional aspects of the meaning of opera.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study has been concerned to show that opera, as it is understood in Europe and throughout large parts of the English-speaking world, is properly viewed, not just as an art, but as an important part of the ceremonial trappings of the state.[1] The argument has laid particular emphasis on two aspects of this. First, that the ceremonies and rituals associated with the opera change little over time. Second, that those same ceremonies and rituals are remarkably similar, even between countries of quite different constitution.

This unchangeability is the most important part of opera's political significance. The argument has been made throughout this thesis that opera-going remains an immutable ritual in a way that visiting the theatre, for example, does not.[2] It could be said that this immutability is the real 'meaning' of the rituals and ceremonies associated with the opera.

The chronicler of the British monarchy's association with the stage, Ian Bevan, describes the first attendance by an English monarch at the theatre. He notes that as early as 1636, Charles I attended the earliest of operatic works, *The Siege of Rhodes*, making it "a gala affair by going in state".[3] This reference to the monarch's attendance at the opera thus adding to the experience and turning it into something more than simply the performance of a mixed media work on stage could equally well describe the experience of going to the opera in early 18th century England or of going to the opera in Warsaw, Sydney or Paris in the 20th century. Describing Covent Garden in post-war austerity Britain, he notes that the same principle applies as "Covent Garden is chosen for state galas because it provides a rich background for ceremonial occasions."[4]

The Coronation celebrations of George V at Covent Garden also demonstrate the association between the monarchy and the opera house in

the 20th century. Bevan describes the scene emphasizing the importance of the decorations, seating arrangements and rank of those in attendance:

> "The artistic extravagance on the stage was matched by the opulent decorations in the house and 5,000 orchids were used to make a frieze of mauve and gold and white in front of 11 centre boxes where the royal party sat. The rest of the theatre was decorated by a hundred thousand fresh roses and innumerable artificial ones. Watteau panels and Gobelin tapestries transformed the foyer into an art gallery. The air was cooled by blocks of ice hidden amid banks of hothouse flowers.
> The King's guests and his suite filled a third of the available seats. On his left sat the Crown Prince of Turkey. There were more than 100 people present of royal rank – a pageant of Hohenzollern, Hapsburg, Bourbon and Savoy, together with princes of the East, such as events of a few years later made impossible ever to be seen again. Even in the glittery history of royal occasions at Covent Garden, there have been few nights to compare with this:"[5]

In virtually no other sphere of activity except significantly some areas of state military ceremonial and pageantry can this kind of display be witnessed. Opera is remarkably ageless. There is, for example, no 18th century poem, or novel, or painting, or building design which could be taken for a contemporary design. The opera represents a continuity of pageantry and display of a state institution linking its present meaning powerfully with its original one.

Tradition and ceremony determine its presentation. Once again Bevan remarks that the iconography of the House reminds public and monarchy of their mutual rôles. The traditional relationship between the monarch and the opera will continue to be played out as a reminder of the elaborate ceremonial significance of both opera and the State.

> "The Queen must often be reminded of the long tradition which links royalty with the theatre, just as the public is reminded when, for instance, they go to the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden and see the royal cipher embroidered on the stage curtains. The crowd scenes at Covent Garden's elaborate opera productions offer another reminder – for this theatre has the privilege of calling on the Brigade of Guards to supply soldiers as stage extras."[6]

The Australian cultural critic Andrew Riemer reminds us that it is not only in England that opera symbolises the image a state wishes to project of itself. Writing on post-war Hungary he affirms that:

> "Opera is one of the means – perhaps the crucial one – of such a society's celebrating itself as a superior civilisation."[7]

Such a statement could equally well describe the reasons for the restoration of Covent Garden after the war, the creation of the Opéra Bastille after the election of France's first socialist government in half a century and the desire

behind the NSW state government's support for the radical design of the Sydney Opera House.

This thesis has attempted to prove by cumulative example that opera has many facets. It is a performed work combining voice, dance, allegory, great archetypical mythology and machinery, but the art of opera does not exist without an opera audience attending an opera house, until that is, we have the total activity we have termed 'the opera'. The opera house is a modern day state palace. The experience of going there is a participation in state ceremonial. The clothing, the adornments, the refreshments, the transport are designed to evoke, as the present Prince of Wales wrote, "the feeling of being somewhere rather special".[8] This mystique which surrounds both the opera house and the operatic institution has aroused passion, fascination, resentment, but it has not left indifference.

For centuries society has debated the value of opera, and the nature of the operatic experience. We have seen great literary figures in England and France spurn opera only then to discover that they themselves were frustrated librettists. We have also seen over and over again, the opera house and the opera experience used as targets of popular invective. The notions of opera and house have been challenged by many regimes, however in the face of all kinds of debate, it has remained. The poignant example of the idea, design and construction of the Sydney Opera House well illustrates this point. Furthermore, it is often at the opera that governments are challenged or leaders go to present themselves to prove their successful escape from assassination attempts to celebrate military or political triumph.

Most significantly the language used to describe opera has remained consistent. It remains within the register of the superlative. 'Magnificence', 'glory', 'prestige', 'extravagance', 'gold', 'diamonds', 'grand' and 'noble' are some of the most common terms used to describe it whether the writer be defending opera or deriding it.

Throughout this thesis many theories have been explored which contribute to understanding opera. From an historical perspective the evidence is overwhelming that it has been a consistent symbol recognised by all western societies since the 17th century. In terms of social critics and theorists it is a highly charged art which frequently divides the worlds of debate. From a

semiotic viewpoint it is a complex carrier of signs and symbols. The work, the house, the social codes, all contribute to investing opera with a highly charged meaning. Furthermore, even when there are subtle differences in concepts such as the nature of a state institution, opera transcends such barriers making it a representation of some of the more complex elements of the state.

This thesis argues that opera owes something to all of the above and even more. It is because of its chameleon-like nature that it is so powerful. Through the ages, opera has represented the pinnacle of culture even when culture shifted its power base. Thus in France, for example, an opera house (the Palais Garnier) designed for the needs of an empire could so easily be adapted to serve as a grand symbol epitomising a new republic.

In official declarations and language on opera we see time and time again the same arguments used by the state in order to justify its existence. Monarchs and governments from Louis XIV to François Mitterrand like to say that opera should exist in their country because it exists in other countries which rival theirs culturally. They also promote the notion that it attracts foreigners to their capital cities and is a significant employer which creates spin-offs for many industries. These arguments have been used by monarchies, democracies and revolutionary governments alike. It is important that although many powers have queried the need for opera they have all concluded that it is a vital part of the nation's assets.

These arguments continue to hold true today, but are clouded by the ambiguous terminology of public relations language. Today's 'arts world', as we have seen, is focused on demonstrating to the enfranchised public that it has the 'right' to partake in the nation's cultural fruits. This is problematic, as demonstrated by Clive Priestley in his report to government on the Royal Opera House, in 1983. He clearly could not give a satisfactory response to the following question put to him by a disgruntled tax payer:

> "In recommending a higher level of funding for the [Royal Opera House] ROH I am conscious that the ROH is an institution which attracts controversy. This is captured in a nutshell in a letter whose author said that she and her husband and their three children would dearly like to see the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden but that it was beyond their means. She wondered how it could be right for a company supported by public funds to be so far out of reach of ordinary families."[9]

The composite examples which make up the thrust of this thesis clearly explain Priestley's dilemma. The writer has pointed to the dichotomy now

evident between the language of 'accessibility' and the reality of the public funding of culture. The nation needs its national institution, if only to demonstrate to others including 'ordinary families' that there is a national standard. There is however no room to invite all of the nation to participate in the experience. The nation can share in its reflected glory, take tours of the theatres, on occasion enter the house through schools' programmes or the sale on the day of performance of cheaper seats in the gods. This allows just enough 'accessibility' for government to maintain its agenda and yet argue that opera is open to all. One recalls the Canning/Isaacs debate in Chapter 3.4 in which Isaacs defends the institution's existence arguing that today opera is not only accessible but also relevant to all aspects of contemporary culture whereas Canning spurns opera as representing only the interests of the élite.

A further example of this dichotomy occurred in 1964 when a replacement for Sir David Webster was being sought by the Board of Covent Garden. Lord Harewood describes this contentious scene vividly:

> "...the matter of David Webster's successor was considered. Arnold Goodman was indignant since he felt the Arts Council should know what was being discussed and insisted that the post must be advertised. He was told this was not to be. 'Those Bourbons!' he exclaimed. 'They are besotted with their own power and don't see that people from outside may come to question it.'"[10]

Power on this occasion can be seen as resting in hands outside those of the democratically elected government of the day. The importance of who should head this major national institution was therefore seen to be more critical than other government nominations for public posts.

Opera houses, it has been maintained, are the State palaces of old, reflecting the intrigues of shifting power bases and demonstrating permanence and grandeur. They will be maintained in countries or major cities which rival capitals, and they will continue to be designed and constructed. Essentially, Opera Houses distinguish themselves from the other arts by occupying a very different rôle relative to the State. In fact they invariably receive preferred treatment from it. This is because they are maintained by the State for many reasons, the least of which are artistic. It can be said, therefore, that in the United Kingdom today, the Royal Opera House is not really competing with the other 'arts' for lottery money or subvention from arts councils or public donations. Furthermore, for the reasons which have been given, it will

certainly continue to be funded rather more extensively than the other arts. Richard Morrison, the Arts editor in *The Times*, forcefully espoused such a view in a recent article:

> "What most depressed me about the lottery-funded schemes so far proposed, however is their utter predictability. Cities vie with each other for prestige: hence all these opera house and museum proposals. Existing cultural giants – Covent Garden, the South Bank – rush to bolster their own status quo with vast redevelopments.
>
> Nobody, it seems, is willing to step outside the constraints of self-interest and take a hard look at what the British arts scene actually *needs*. Where is the nationwide initiative to put arts education and performing opportunities back into classrooms? Or the imaginative voucher scheme that would provide, say, four free tickets a year for top-class performances to all those under 25? Either initiative could transform the cultural face of Britain and build audiences far into the 21st century. Both could easily be funded by lottery money.
>
> Yet neither will happen: nor anything remotely like them. Why? Because old pals would not benefit. Old school ties would not be acknowledged. Vision might be required, and a concept of public service rather than self-service. Does such public service exist in modern Britain? One lives in faint hope – just like the people in the queue for the scratch cards"[11]

Opera represents something much more deeply ingrained and grand than merely an 'old-school-tie' network, or inadequate structure of subvention or patronage. It is dealing with an institution the roots of which are inextricably linked with the very concept of the state, which provides its ceremonial core.

Opera reverberates with significance. It is an accretion of high symbolism, not just in music but in the opera house itself. This is strengthened by time. Its permanence through the vicissitudes of social and political change demonstrates its importance, for physical constructs accrue their symbolism by weight of association over the years.

Throughout this study reference has been made to instances when opera has functioned as a venue for state ceremonial. The many factors which make up its broadest meaning do not possess the same functions individually as no one aspect of them replaces the whole construct. This reinforces the central hypothesis that opera is extremely important to the state and is not a substitute for something else. It is not only a venue where those in power parade themselves, nor an art, nor a building, nor a more elaborate social concept such as for example that of a Roman forum. It is itself of distinct and separate importance and as has been argued is greater than the sum of its parts.

The hypothesis has been tested largely against examples from Britain, France and Australia. It can now be offered for testing in other cultures. It

can only be asserted at this stage that it is probably true of all cultures which have state opera houses (on the European model) but it would require further exhaustive historical analysis to prove that this thesis generally holds good. It will be possible for researchers in coming decades to re-test it to see whether the form of the opera house survives the current radical changes in society. In Britain and France, certainly, there is every indication that it will.

Notes and References

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. In the Arts Council of Great Britain's strategy paper *The Glory of the Garden: The Development of the Arts in England: A Strategy for a Decade*, the Council made its endorsement of opera clear:

"The Council has always given major support to opera which is a very important art form. That will continue. The staging of full-scale opera is an expensive business..."

In that year the subsidy per ticket for opera which reached an audience of 876,000 was £19.00 compared with that for drama of £2.80 reaching an audience of 7,511,000. Yet in the same year Priestley in his Report to the Earl of Gowrie, Minister for the Arts *Financial Scrutiny of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden Limited* would recommend that (page 27):

1. the Government should write off the accumulated deficit at end 1983/84...and
2. the forecast base level of the grant for 1984/85 should be increased by £1.8 million from £10.55 million to £12.35 million to match the projected funding requirement.

This at a time when the ACGB was attempting to curtail its overall budget on performing arts.

In 1991 in France the overall budget for music and dance "Le budget de la Direction de la Musique et de la Danse" stood at 1,869 498 million francs or 14.48% of the Cultural budget. Of the state music theatres opera received from a total budget of 681,604 million francs, more than 80% of its working budget with 50,996 devoted to the Opéra Bastille and 524,657 for the Opéras of Paris. Source *Mesures* janvier 1991 no. 6. Direction de la Musique et de la Danse.

In 1993 "Le Budget de la musique et de la danse" was 1,759 217 million francs. Of the state music theatres opera received from a total budget of 706,688 million francs, with 550,618 million francs devoted to the Opéras of Paris. Source *Mesures* janvier/fevrier 1993 no. 21.

In 1995 the French Ministry of Culture undertook a questionnaire in 15 European countries in order to find out amongst other things what sums of money were being spent on the arts in these countries and in particular how much national companies received in comparison to others. Funding of national flagship companies was, not surprisingly infinitely greater than for the sum total of the small companies. Furthermore it is significant that funding for the opera exceeded in all European countries the sums received by flagship theatrical institutions.

2. In Finland in 1991 the state subsidy for opera was 111,420 FIM for 243 performances compared with state subsidy for the national theatre of 35,450,000 FIM for 850 performances. By 1993 this sum was increased to 122,500,000 for 222 performances compared with a small drop in subsidy to the national theatre of 35,336,600 for 830 performances. Source: The Arts Council of Finland, Research and Information Unit, page 158, Table 13B.

3. The Royal Opera House received the largest grant (£55 million) awarded by the Arts Council. Furthermore this sum will increase as the Royal Opera House is expected to receive £71 million. *Evening Standard* 6 August 1996.

4. GOURRET, Jean. *Histoire des Salles de l'Opéra de Paris.* Guy Trédaniel, Editions de la Maisie, 1985. pp. 105-106. See also M Elizabeth Bartlett 'The New Repertory of the Opera during the Reign of Terror: Revolutionary Rhetoric and Operatic Consequences' in BOYD, Malcolm, Ed. *Music and the French Revolution.* Cambridge University Press, 1992. p. 108.

5. BRADSHAW, Martha, Ed. *Soviet Theaters 1917-1941. A collection of articles.* Research Programme on the USSR, Brooklyn College, New York, 1954. pp. x-xiii.

6. The President of the Republic announced, on 9th March 1982, the decision to construct a new opera at the place de la Bastille in Paris. This announcement was cited by the Minister of Culture Jack Lang in his press release on 17th January 1983 announcing an international architectural competition for the opera house.

7. The date of announcement of a competition to design the opera house was 13 September 1955 by the NSW Labor Premier John Cahill.

8. HORNE, Donald. *The Public Culture: The Triumph of Industrialism.* Pluto Press, London, 1986. p. 156 "With the 'constitutional monarchies', however, the neo-traditional is a central part of the 'legitimations' of state. In Britain, the monarchic presence suffuses the public culture with its glow, in the palaces, the bright uniforms of the guards regiments, the royal coaches, the ceremonies of state, the continuing display of diamonds on royal females and the continued presence of the crown jewels themselves, safe in the Tower, guarded by Beefeaters."

9. The original brief is set out in the following document: Opéra de la Bastille. Concours international d'architecture. Dossier élaboré par la Mission de la Bastille (1983)

10. LUMLEY, Benjamin. *Reminiscences of the Opera.* Da Capo Press Reprint Series, New York, 1976. pp. 48-49.

11. BARTHES, Roland. 'The Eiffel Tower' in *Selected Writings.* Ed. Susan Sontag. Fontana, 1982. p. 247.

12. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra: Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métailié, 1990. p. 258. My translation: "J'étais prête à transiger sur un gris ou un bleu, mais je ne pouvais accepter un rouge. Nous avions même trouvé une justification: le rouge correspondait aux salles du XIXe siècle, le bleu à celles du XVIIIe, il fallait une autre couleur pour notre siècle." This is also cited by Maryvonne de Saint Pulgent, *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Editions Robert Lafont, Paris, 1991. p. 256.

13. DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HERITAGE. *Annual Report 1994.* The Government's Expenditure Plans 1994-5 to 1996-7. HMSO, London. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for National Heritage and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury by Command of Her Majesty The Queen, February 1994. Chapter 1. The Role of the Department. *Rationale* 1.7 p. 2.

14. DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HERITAGE. *Annual Report 1994.* The Government's Expenditure Plans 1994-5 to 1996-7. HMSO London. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for National Heritage and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury by Command of Her Majesty The Queen, February 1994. Chapter 1. The Role of the Department. *Rationale* 1.4. p. 2.

15. DICKENS, Charles. *Hard Times.* Oxford Paperbacks. pp. 59-61.
The text continues:
"'...Come, ma'am, you know you were born in the lap of luxury. ...'
'And you were in crack society. Devlish high society,' he said, warming his legs.'
...
p.61 'You were in the tiptop fashion, and all the rest of it,' said Mr. Bounderby."

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17. KLEIN, Hermann. *Thirty Years of Musical Life in London 1870-1900.* Da Capo Press Music Reprint Series, Century and Co, New York, 1978. p. 231.

18. BEECHAM, Sir Thomas. *A Mingled Chime: Leaves from an autobiography.* Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., Essex, 1944. p. 88.

19. PASCAL, Marie. 'The Present Crisis in Argentine Opera' translated by Ossia Trilling in ROSENTHAL, Harold, Ed. *Opera Annual 4.* John Calder, London, 1957. pp. 106-108.

20. CAHILL, J.J. Premier of New South Wales *Ceremony to Commemorate the Commencement of the Building of the Sydney Opera House.* 2nd March 1959.

21. H. Dalton, letter to Sir John Anderson, 1 August 1946, quoted in PICK, J. *The West End: Mismanagement and Snobbery.* City Arts, London, 1983. p. 158.

Chapter 2: The Meanings of Opera

1. See, for example, *The Oxford English Dictionary.* Clarendon Press, London, 1989. (*Oxford English Dictionary*) "*Opera* a. (Adoption of, adopted from It. Opera, a. L. (Latin) opera, labour ..., a work produced, f. (Formed on) opus oper - work; cf. F. (French) opéra"
Websters Third New International Dictionary. Merriam Webster Inc., 1981. (*Websters International Dictionary)*, "1. Plural of OPUS, 2. [It. Work, opera, fr. L. Work, pains"
GROUT, Donald Jay. *A Short History of Opera.* Columbia University Press, 1965: "The word itself, however, was not used in its present sense before 1634. It means literally a 'work' (compare 'opus')..."
SADIE, Stanley, Ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera.* Grove Dictionaries of Music, New York, 1992 (*The New Grove Dictionary of Opera)* Opera, §1: The word p. 671 (It., from Lat. *opera*, plural of *opus*, 'work' ; Fr. opéra; Ger. Oper).

2. See, for example, GROUT, Donald Jay. *A Short History of Opera.* Columbia University Press, 1965. "The first work now known as an 'opera' was performed in 1597. The word itself, however, was not used in its present sense before 1634. It means literally a 'work' (compare 'opus') and is a shortened form of the Italian opera in musica, that is, a 'work of music'. ... The word 'opera' came into general use first in England (from 1656); it was not common in France or Germany until the 18th century, and is still relatively infrequent in Italy."
DENT, E.J. 'The Nomenclature of Opera' in *Music and Letters* XXV (1944) pp. 132-40.
WARRACK, John and WEST, Ewan, Eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Opera.* Oxford University Press, 1992. (*The Oxford Dictionary of Opera*)

3. *The Oxford English Dictionary.*

4. These terms are used often. Examples are the titles of two well known books on the subject: *The Ultimate Art: Essays Around and About Opera* by David Littlejohn and *Opera: The Extravagant Art* by Herbert Lindenberger. The reason I undertook research in this field was in fact prompted by a comment made to me by a colleague at the Victorian Ministry for the Arts who referred to opera as an "élite art" and therefore the implication of this was that opera was deemed to be unworthy of attention by administrators of community arts projects. This apparent non-sequitur prompted this thesis.

5. JOHN, Allen and WATKINS, Dennis. *The Eighth Wonder.* An Opera Australasia Libretto No 27, Pelliner, Pty Ltd, Sydney, 1995.

6. *The Oxford English Dictionary*

7. *The Collins English Dictionary*, Harpers Collins, Sydney, 1991. (*The Collins English Dictionary)*

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9. *Le Grand Robert de la Langue Française.* Le Robert, Paris, 1985.

10. LITTRÉ, Emile. *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française.* Ed. Jean-Jacques Pauvert, Littré, Paris, 1956.

11. ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. *Oeuvres Complètes de J.J. Rousseau* 5th Volume *Dictionnaire de Musique.* Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie, Paris, 1864. p. 140.

12. DENT, E.J. 'The Nomenclature of Opera' in *Music and Letters* XXV p. 214.

13. ROSENTHAL, Harold and WARRACK, J. Eds. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979.

14. WARRACK, John and WEST, Ewan, Eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Opera.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992.

15. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* 'Opera, §III: Nature' by Bernard Williams p. 676.

16. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera.* Preface p. ix by Stanley Sadie.

17. LITTLEJOHN, David. *The Ultimate Art: Essays Around and About Opera.* University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1992. p. 77.

18. ARNOLD, Dennis, Ed. *The New Oxford Companion to Music.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983. p. 1290.

19. SADIE, Stanley, Ed. *The History of Opera.* The New Grove Handbooks in Music, Macmillan, London, 1989. p. xii.

20. Davenant *The First Dayes Entertainment.* Prologue (1656) quoted by DENT, E.J. 'The Nomenclature of Opera.' in *Music and Letters* XXV p. 225.

21. DRYDEN, John. *Albion and Albanius.* Preface. 1685. Quoted by *The Oxford English Dictionary* 1.a.; DENT, E.J. *Opera.* Pelican Books, 1945. p. 141; and WHITE, E.W. *The Rise of English Opera.* John Lehmann, 1951. p.50.

22. See, for example SAINT-EVREMOND *Oeuvres meslées de Mr de Saint-Evremond.* London, 1709 quoted by DENT, E.J. *Foundations of English Opera* p. 160, Littlejohn in *The Ultimate Art* p. 2 and GROUT *A Short History of Opera* p. 7.

23. ADDISON, Joseph *The Spectator.* 1711 quoted by ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, 1957. p. 198.

24. POPE, Alexander. *The Dunciad.* 1728 quoted by WHITE, E.W. *The Rise of English Opera.* John Lehmann, 1951. p. 49.

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It should be noted that Dr. Johnson's stricture refers only to Italian opera in England and not to opera in general. The phrase "an exotick and irrational entertainment" has been removed from its context and widely misquoted in recent years.

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28. VOLTAIRE *Oedipe* Tragédie en 5 actes, representée le 18 novembre 1718. Théatre de Voltaire Nouvelle Edition revue après les meilleurs textes, Librairie Garnier, Paris, no date of publication. p. 13.

29. BURNEY, Charles quoted in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* 'Opera, §III: Nature' by Bernard WILLIAMS p. 677.

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35. CONRAD, Peter. *A Song of Love and Death: The Meaning of Opera.* The Hogarth Press, London, 1987. p. 11.

36. BOLL, André. *L'Opéra de l'avenir: Etude Polémique.* Olivier Perrin, 1968. p. 8.

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39. KIMBERLEY, Nick. 'Opera's Arch Showman' in *The Guardian*, Thursday January 9th 1992.

40. *Oxford English Dictionary*

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44. *Oxford English Dictionary*

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47. BESTERMAN, Theodore, Ed. *The Complete Works of Voltaire. Correspondence and Related Documents.* Institut et Musée Voltaire, Genève, University of Toronto Press (1969) Volume 86. January 1730-April 1734 Letter from Voltaire to Pierre Robert le Cornier de Cideville D370-D730 Definitive edition p. 250. Also quoted by the 19th century theatre historian Castil-Blaze. p. 230.

48. ADORNO, Theodor, W. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music.* The Seabury Press, New York, 1976. p. 83.

49. LIEBERMANN, Rolf, Ed. *L'Opera, Dictionnaire chronologique de 1597 à nos jours.* Editeurs Ramsay, Paris, 1979. p. 5.

50. LINDENBERGER, Herbert. *Opera: The Extravagant Art.* Cornell University Press, 1984. p. 235.

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52. OLIVIER, Philippe in AUTREMENT *Opéra: La Diva et le Souffleur.* Series Mutations No. 71, Paris, 1975.

53. REMY, Pierre-Jean. *Bastille: Rêver un opéra.* Editions Plon, Paris, 1989. p. 82.

54. BEAUDOUARD, Jack. *Mourir à l'Opéra. Essai.* Société de musicologie de Langudeoc, Beziers, 1990. p. 7.

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56. VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM. *25th Anniversary of Opera and Ballet at Post-War Covent Garden.* Exhibition Catalogue, V&A, 1971. p. 22.

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61. LITTLEJOHN, David. *The Ultimate Art: Essays Around and About Opera.* University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1992 pp. 31-32.

62. *Oxford English Dictionary*

63. *Oxford English Dictionary* (Johnson).

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65. VINCENT, Andrew. *Theories of the State.* Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987. p. 6.

66. BURKE, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* Penguin, London. p. 196.

67. BURKE, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* Penguin, London. pp. 196-197.

68. TOLSTOY, Leo. *What is Art?* Penguin Classics, Penguin, London. p. 109.
The paragraph continues: "...a crowd of three thousand people who not only patiently witnessed all this absurd nonsense but even considered it their duty to be delighted with it... The cream of the cultured upper classes sits out six hours of this insane performance, and goes away imagining that by paying tribute to this nonsense it has acquired a fresh right to esteem itself advanced and enlightened."

69. TOLSTOY, Leo. *What is Art?* Penguin Classics, Penguin, London. p. 109.

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Chapter 3: The Context of Opera

1. VINCENT, Andrew. *Theories of the State.* Basic Blackwell, Oxford, 1987. p. 6 Stambrook argues that this process is slightly shorter but demonstrates all the elements in opera's evolution. It is only during this period that philosophers, poets, politicians have come to believe that the possession of a common language, common culture and common heritage is or ought to be the prized possession of their particular group or nation. STAMBROOK, F.G. *European Nationalism in the 19th Century.* Cheshire Modern History Monographs, Cheshire Publishing Pty Ltd, 1969. p. 5.

2. LITTLEJOHN, David. *The Ultimate Art: Essays Around and About Opera.* University of California Press, Berkeley and LA, 1992.

3. Examples of such intervention are: Louis XIV's establishment of opera; the letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Arts Council of Great Britain i.e. "see that opera is not let down"; the maintenance of opera by the Paris Commune; or the Bolshoi after the Russian Revolution.

4. In 18th century France the opera of the court and the city were separated. In England the opera was financed by rival groups of nobility. In 19th century France Véron stated that the opera of the 1830s was the triumph of the bourgeoisie. Later in the century the opera was to be very much an image of Napoleon III's prestige and although the Palais Garnier was designed under his reign it was to house the leading names of the 3rd Republic. In England, opera was financed in the public domain by entrepreneurs but supported as an aristocratic pastime. Harris comments upon its need for support by the aristocracy as well as the effect that visits from the Prince of Wales had on the tone of the house. In the 20th century, opera has both in England and France become the responsibility of the state. In France it is financed through the Ministère de la Culture, the state department which is responsible for cultural expenditure. Opera, not surprisingly is one of its greatest sources of expenditure. In England the Arts Council of Great Britain is the major supporter of opera although there are quite substantial contributions from donors and sponsors. The notion of patronage, however, over the three centuries of opera's existence has been constant: one class supporting opera, which in turn, supports the state.

5. The so-called democratisation of opera which focuses on accessibility of opera will be discussed later in this thesis. Although 'an opera' is performed in this context, 'opera' is not fully represented in the grand public democratic arena.

6. This did not mean that the Italian opera performed was necessary brought from Italy. It was the understanding that it had been written in Italian or in an 'Italian' spirit and was performed often by English singers, or singers of many nationalities singing in a number of tongues.

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10. PRICE, Curtis. 'Chapter IV Baroque Opera, England' in SADIE, Stanley, Ed. *The History of Opera.* Macmillan, London, 1989. p. 38.

11. See, for example, WHITE, Eric Walter. *A History of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1983. pp. 45-47,
WHITE, Eric, Walter. *The Rise of English Opera.* John Lehmann, 1951. pp. 27-29,
DENT, E.J. 'The Nomenclature of Opera' in *Music and Letters* XXV p. 215 "An account of the nomenclature of opera in England must begin at least with the *mask* ... more commonly nowadays spelt *masque*, although it preceded the introduction of opera under its own name."
ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, 1957. pp. 23-36,
Shakespeare's England: An Account of the Life and Manners of his Age. Chapter 10 The Mask. Clarendon Press

12. NICOLL, Allardyce. *World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh.* Harrap, London, 1949. p. 337.

13. NICOLL, Allardyce. *World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh.* Harrap, London, 1949. p. 336.

14. DIZIKIES, J. *Opera in America: A Cultural History.* Yale University Press, 1993. p. 17.

15. DENT, E.J. *A Theatre for Everybody: The Story of the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells.* T.V. Boardman and Co., London, 1945. p. 55.

16. DENT, E.J. *A Theatre for Everybody: The Story of the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells.* T.V. Boardman and Co., London, 1945. p. 55.

17. WHITE, Eric Walter. *The Rise of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1982. p. 65.

18. Quoted by ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, London, 1957. p. 70.

19. Quoted by ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, London, 1957. p. 105.

20. *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* Quoted by ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, London, 1957. p. 66

21. DRYDEN, John. *Peru, or a new Ballad* from *Miscellany Poems* Quoted by ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, London, 1957. p. 66.

22. Letter from John EVELYN dated 6th May 1659 quoted by WHITE, E.W. *A History of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1983. p. 78.

23. SADIE, Stanley, Ed. *The History of Opera.* MacMillan, London, 1989. p. 40.

24. DENT, E.J. *A Theatre for Everybody: The Story of the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells.* T.V. Boardman and Co., 1945. p. 55.

25. PRICE, Curtis. Chapter 4 'Baroque Opera, England' in SADIE, Stanley, Ed. *The History of Opera.* MacMillan, 1989. p. 40.

26. PURCELL, Henry. *Dedication to Dioclesian* quoted by AMIS, John and ROSE, Michael, Eds. *Words About Music: An Anthology.* Faber & Faber, London, 1989 and ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, 1957. p. 149.

27. DENT, E.J. *A Theatre for Everybody: The Story of the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells.* T.V. Boardman and Co., 1945. p. 56.

28. DENT, E.J. *Opera in English.* Penguin, London, 1946. p. 176.

29. WHITE, Eric Walter. *The Rise of English Opera.* John Lehmann, London, 1985. p. 115.

30. WHITE, Eric Walter. *A History of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1983. p. 134.
NALBACH, D. *The King's Theatre 1704-1867.* The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1972. p. 1: "a group of wealthy aristocrats"

31. 1704 The Queen's Theatre (Queen Anne)
1714 The King's Theatre (George I)
1837 Her Majesty's Theatre (Queen Victoria)
1901 His Majesty's Theatre (Edward VII)
1952 Her Majesty's Theatre (Queen Elizabeth II)

32. NALBACH, D. *The King's Theatre 1704-1867.* The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1972. p. 12.

33. CIBBER, Colley. *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian.* (1740) Ed. John Maurice Evans, 1987. p. 223.

34. CIBBER, Colley. *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian.* (1740) Ed. John Maurice Evans, 1987. p. 224.

35. CIBBER, Colley. *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian.* (1740) Ed. John Maurice Evans, 1987. p. 224.

36. STEELE, Sir Richard. *Correspondence.* Penguin Classics. Friday December 30 1709, and ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, 1957. p. 193.

37. STEELE, Sir Richard. *Correspondence.* Penguin Classics. 'Theatrical Intelligence', and ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, 1957. p. 193. on production of Pyrrhus.

38. Similarly it is valid to ask the question whether Rousseau, prompted by the success of his libretto *Le Devin du Village*, was not emboldened to lay scorn upon the French opera of his day based as it was on different precepts from his own.

39. ADDISON, Joseph *The Spectator* (1710) and quoted by ARUNDELL, Dennis. *The Critic at the Opera.* Ernest Benn, 1957. pp. 202-204.

40. NALBACH, D. *The King's Theatre 1704-1867.* The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1972. p. 17.

41. NALBACH, D. The King's Theatre 1704-1867. The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1972. p. 35.

42. CAREY. *Satyr on the Luxury and Effeminacy of the Age.* (1729) Quoted by FISKE, Roger. *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century.* OUP, London, 1973. p. 128.

43. NALBACH, D. *The King's Theatre 1704-1867.* The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1972. p. 36.

44. NALBACH, D. *The King's Theatre 1704-1867.* The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1972. p. 36.

45. HOGARTH, George. *Memoirs of the Opera in Italy, France, Germany and England* Vol. 1 pp. 362-363 (1728) Da Capo Press, Music Reprint Series, 1969.

46. YOUNG, B.A. 'From Playhouse to Opera House.' in SAINT, Andrew, Ed. *A History of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden 1732-1982.* The Royal Opera House, London, 1982. p. 41.

47. NALBACH, D. *The King's Theatre 1704-1867.* The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1972. p. 39.

48. NALBACH, D. *The King's Theatre 1704-1867.* The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1972. p. 39.

49. BURNEY, Charles. *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands.* Vol. II (1772) Ed. Percy A. Scholes as *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Italy.* OUP, 1959. pp. 91-92.

50. NALBACH, D. *The King's Theatre 1704-1867* (1972) The Society for Theatre Research p.42

51. BURNEY, Charles. *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands.* Vol. II (1772) Ed. Percy A. Scholes as *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Italy.* OUP, 1959. p. 92.

52. NALBACH, D. *The King's Theatre 1704-1867.* The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1972. p. 46.

53. See for example: WHITE, E.W. *The Rise of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1982. p. 49.

54. WHITE, E.W. *The Rise of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1982 p. 49.

55. RAYNOR, Henry. *Music in England.* Robert Hale, London, 1980. p. 126.

56. CASTIL-BLAZE. *L'Académie Impériale de Musique.* 2 Vols pp. 414-415:
"Les deux Vestris étaient à Londres en congé. Le 22 février 1781 l'affiche annonçait une représentation au bénéfice d'Auguste Vestris, ce virtuose y dansait les pas que le public affectionnait le plus. Le célèbre orateur Edmond Burke devait faire ce jour même au parlement lecture de son fameux bill économique. Lord Nugent, fou de musique et de danse, proposa de remettre cette lecture; et, pour ne pas donner à ce retard un motif aussi frivole que celui qu'il avait en tête, il representa que c'était un jour de jeûne pour le royaume. Burke de fut pas dupe de cette excuse, et pour la faire rejeter, en dévoila l'objet. Sa révélation eut en résultat tout différent de celui qu'il en attendait. Beaucoup de lords, qui n'aimaient pas moins le talent de Vestris, et qui ne se doutaient pas de la coïncidence de sa représentation avec la séance du parlement, furent charmés d'en être avertis, et se rangèrent sur-le-champ du coté du lord dilettante. La remise proposée par Nogent fut adoptée à la majorité de trente-trois voix."

57. DENT, E.J. *The Foundations of English Opera.* Cambridge University Press, 1928. p. 44.

58. ISHERWOOD, Robert M. *Music in the Service of the King: France in the Seventeenth Century.* Cornell University Press, 1973. p. 150.

59. 'Privilège de Perrin' 28 June 1669 quoted by GOURRET, J. *Ces Hommes Qui Ont Fait L'Opéra 1669 - 1984.* Editions Albatros, Paris, 1984. p. 251.

60. 'Privilège de Perrin' 28 June 1669 quoted by GOURRET, J. *Ces Hommes Qui Ont Fait L'Opéra 1669 - 1984.* Editions Albatros, Paris, 1984. p. 251.

61. 'Privilège de Perrin' 28 June 1669 quoted by GOURRET, J. *Ces Hommes Qui Ont Fait L'Opéra 1669 - 1984.* Editions Albatros, Paris, 1984. p. 252.

62. 'Privilège de Lully' March 1672 quoted by GOURRET, J. *Ces Hommes Qui Ont Fait L'Opéra 1669 - 1984.* Editions Albatros, Paris, 1984. p. 253.

63. 'Privilège de Lully' quoted by VÉRON, Dr. *L'Opéra de Paris 1820-1835* Editions Michel de Maule, Paris p. 160
GOURRET, J. *Ces Hommes Qui Ont Fait L'Opéra 1669 - 1984.* Editions Albatros, Paris, 1984. p. 26.

64. 'Privilège de Lully' quoted by VÉRON, Dr. *L'Opéra de Paris 1820-1835* Editions Michel de Maule, Paris p. 161
GOURRET, J. *Ces Hommes Qui Ont Fait L'Opéra 1669 - 1984.* Editions Albatros, Paris, 1984. p. 253.

65. RAGUENET, F. *Parallèle des italiens et des français en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéra* (Paris 1702/R1976, 3/C1710); Eng Edn. (London 1709/ R 1968 repr. in MQ xxxii (1946), 411) *Receuil général des opéra* (Paris 1703-46/R 1971)

66. *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* 1702 - 1710
Querelle des Bouffons 1754 - 1760
Gluckist/Piccinist 1770s

67. RAGUENET, F. *Parallèle des italiens et des français en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéras* (Paris 1702/R1976, 3/C1710); Eng Edn. (London 1709/ R 1968 repr. in MQ xxxii (1946), 411) *Receuil général des opéra* (Paris 1703-46/R 1971)
quoted in STRUNK, Oliver. *Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era.* Faber and Faber, London, 1981. p. 121.

68. RAGUENET, F. *Parallèle des italiens et des français en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéras* (Paris 1702/R1976, 3/C1710); Eng Edn. (London 1709/ R 1968 repr. in MQ xxxii (1946), 411) *Receuil général des opéra* (Paris 1703-46/R 1971)
quoted in STRUNK, Oliver. *Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era.* Norton and Co., New York, 1965. p. 127.

69. CERF DE LA VIEVILLE. *Traité du bon goût de la musique. Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française.* (Brussels 1704-6/R1972) English translation in STRUNK, Oliver. *Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era.* Faber and Faber, London, 1981. p. 145.
In his conclusions his sense of fealty to his nation dictated his support of the genre as a French construct.
"In the matter of taste, ... great nobles are only men like ourselves. ... But in case you put your trust in authorities, we have one on our side to whom you can defer. The King-

> I should name another name to you, madame
> Knew I of any higher. ...

the King, I say, is on our side. But I am no courtier. I do not wish to stress that name, however great it may be, or to maintain that it decides. Let us put aside from the person of the King all the splendor which his rank and his reign bestow upon it, and let us regard him only as a private person in his kingdom. It is only rendering him the justice which one would refuse to a minister out of favour to say that of all the men of Europe he is one of those born with the greatest sense and the most direct and just intelligence. He loves music and is a competent judge of it."

70. ISHERWOOD, Robert M. *Music in the Service of the King: France in the Seventeenth Century.* Cornell University Press, 1973. pp. 53-54.

71. Quoted in de SAINT PULGENT, Maryvonne. *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Robert Lafont, Paris, 1991. p. 151.

72. de SAINT PULGENT, Maryvonne. *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Robert Lafont, Paris, 1991. p. 151.

73. Von GRIMM, F.W. *The Little Prophet of Boehmischbroda.* (1753) Text: correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique, XVI. Paris, 1882 pp. 313-336 quoted in STRUNK, Oliver. *Source Readings in Music History, The Baroque Era.* Norton and Co. New York, 1965. p. 58.

74. Strunk comments: "What is within limits true of Germany, and to a lesser extent of Spain, is not valid for the English scene." p. 63.

75. ROUSSEAU, J.J. *Lettre sur la musique française.* GF Flammarion, Paris, 1993. p. 141.

76. Von GRIMM, F.W. *The Little Prophet of Boehmischbroda.* (1753) Text: correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique, XVI. Paris, 1882 pp. 313-336 quoted in STRUNK, Oliver. *Source Readings in Music History, The Baroque Era.* Norton and Co. New York, 1965. p. 53.

77. ALGAROTTI, Francesco. *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica.* quoted in STRUNK, Oliver. *Source Readings in Music History, The Baroque Era.* Norton and Co., New York, 1965. p. 97.

78. BURNEY, Charles. *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in France and Italy.* (week 12-16 June 1770) Ed. Percy Scholes, Greenwood Press, Connecticut. p. 16.

79. BURNEY, Charles. *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands.* Ed. Percy Scholes, Oxford University Press, 1959. Vol. II p. 81.

80. MUELLER von ASOW, H and E.H. Eds. *The Collected Correspondence and Papers of Christoph Willibold Gluck.* Barrie and Rockliff, London, 1962. p. 31. From *Mercure de France* February 1773, Lettre de M. le Chevalier Gluck sur la musique, and STRUNK, Oliver, Ed. *Source Readings in Music History from Classical Antiquity through the Romantic Era.* W. W. Norton, 1950.

81. LE ROUX, J.J. Officier municipal, administrateur aux établissements publics, 17 August 1791 Report to "faire connaître si ce théâtre était absolument nécessaire au commerce de la capitale" quoted by GOURRET, Jean. *Ces hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, 1984. p. 92.

82. LE ROUX, J.J. Officier municipal, administrateur aux établissements publics, 17 August 1791 Report to "faire connaître si ce théâtre était absolument nécessaire au commerce de la capitale" quoted by GOURRET, Jean. *Ces hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, 1984. p. 93.

83. LE ROUX, J.J. Officier municipal, administrateur aux établissements publics, 17 August 1791 Report to "faire connaître si ce théâtre était absolument nécessaire au commerce de la capitale" quoted by GOURRET, Jean. *Ces hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, 1984. p. 93.

84. GOURRET, Jean. *Ces hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, 1984. p. 93.

85. There are a number of books and voluminous studies which cover this period. The standard authorities such as Asa Briggs, Trevelyan, Plumb, Thompson who contributed much of the initial investigations into this field have now lead to research undertaken by younger historians such as Hobsbawm and Zeldin. The rise in social history and sociology in the 1960s established a field of research into the relationship between music and society. Mackerness and Erlich are indicative exponents of this field. Writers such as White, Temperly and Raynor follow on the research initiated by E.J. Dent in the

early part of this century, clearly marking out a chronological history of music and opera in England.

86. GRUNEISEN, C.L. *The Opera and the Press.* Robert Hardwicke, London, 1869. pp. 4-5.

87. LUMLEY, Benjamin. *Reminiscences of the Opera.* Da Capo Press Reprint Series, New York, 1976. pp. vii-viii.

88. LUMLEY, Benjamin. *Reminiscences of the Opera.* Da Capo Press Reprint Series, New York, 1976. p. viii.

89. KLEIN, Hermann. *The Golden Age of Opera.* G. Routledge and Sons, London, 1933. p. 23.

90. HOBSBAWM, E.J. *The Age of Revolution (Europe from 1789-1848).* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962. p. 270.

91. HOBSBAWM, E.J. *The Age of Revolution (Europe from 1789-1848).* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962. p. 261.

92. MACKERNESS, E.D. *A Social History of English Music.* Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1964. p. 184.

93. HOBSBAWM, E.J. *The Age of Revolution (Europe from 1789-1848).* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962. p. 271.

94. *Morning Chronicle* 26 March 1802 quoted in SMITH, William C, Ed. *The Italian Opera and Contemporary Ballet in London 1789-1820. A Record of Performances and Players with Reports from the Journals of the Time.* The Society for Theatre Research, London, 1955.

95. HAZLITT, William *On Opera*

96. HAZLITT, William *On Opera*

97. DENT, E.J. *A Theatre for Everybody: The Story of the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells.* T.V. Boardman & Co Ltd, London, 1945. p. 59.

98. EBERS, John. *Seven Years of the King's Theatre 1821-1827.* W H Ainsworth, London, 1828. pp. xviii-xxi.

99. WHITE, Eric Walter. *A History of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1983. pp. 295-296.

100. WHITE, Eric Walter. *A History of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1983. pp. 295-296.

101. MACKERNESS, E.D. *A Social History of English Music.* Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1964. Mackerness gives a good account of this on p.189.

102. BURY, J.P.T. 'Introductory Summary' in *The Zenith of European Power: 1830-70*, Vol. X of *The New Cambridge Modern History.* Cambridge University Press, 1960. p. 15.

103. HOBSBAWM, E.J. *The Age of Revolution (Europe from 1789-1848).* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962. p. 274.

104. LAING, S. *Notes of a Traveller on the Social and Political State of France, Prussia, Switzerland, Italy and other parts of Europe.* (1842) quoted by HOBSBAWM, E.J. *The*

Age of Revolution (Europe from 1789-1848). Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962. Chapter 14, The Arts.

105. BRIGGS, Asa. *The Age of Improvement.* Longman, London, 1959. p. 23.

106. BRIGGS, Asa. *The Age of Improvement.* Longman, London, 1959. p. 394.

107. Quoted by BRIGGS, Asa. *Victorian People.* Pelican, London, 1953. p. 48.

108. RAYNOR, Henry. *Music in England.* Robert Hale Limited, London, 1980. p. 137. Raynor remarks that in 1851:
"There was music in the theatre; there was the opera; there was the Philharmonic Society; there were the chamber music concerts of the musical Union and the Beethoven Quartet Society. And there was music in the streets."

109. MAPLESON, J.H. *The Mapleson Memoirs 1848-1888.* 2 vols. Remington & Co., London, 1888. pp. 42-43.

110. HOBSBAWM, E.J. *The Age of Revolution (Europe from 1789-1848).* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962. p. 271:
"Puritanism ... encouraged moderation, thrift, a comfortable spartanism and an unparalleled moral self satisfaction in Britain."

111. MACKERNESS, E.D. *A Social History of English Music* (1964) Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. p.187

112. MAPLESON, J.H. *The Mapleson Memoirs 1848-1888.* 2 vols. Remington & Co., London, 1888. pp. 142.

113. KLEIN, Hermann. *The Golden Age of Opera.* Routledge and Sons, London, 1933. p. 233.

114. "The text of this prospectus is taken from *An Opera Souvenir* by Richard Northcott, specially written and published (by the Opera Publishing Co. London) for the 1919 Beecham Opera Season Covent Garden." WHITE, Eric Walter. *A History of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1983. pp 399-301.

115. *Illustrated London News* 1862 Season quoted by ROSENTHAL, Harold. *The Opera at Covent Garden: A Short History.* Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1967. pp. 53-54.

116. EBERS, John. *Seven Years of the King's Theatre 1821-1827.* W H Ainsworth, London, 1828. pp. xix-xx.

117. EBERS, John. *Seven Years of the King's Theatre 1821-1827.* W H Ainsworth, London, 1828. pp. xxi-xxii.

118. MACREADY, William Charles. *The Journal of William Charles Macready.* Ed. J.C. Trewin. 1967 p. 104.

119. MAPLESON, J.H. *The Mapleson Memoirs 1848-1888.* 2 vols. Remington & Co., London, 1888. pp. 180-181.

120. MAPLESON, J.H. *The Mapleson Memoirs 1848-1888.* 2 vols. Remington & Co., London, 1888. pp. 180-181.

121. WHITE, Eric Walter. *A History of English Opera.* Faber and Faber, London, 1983. p. 298.

122. SHAW, George Bernard. in *The Musical Times.* 1889.

123. BLOM, E. *Music in England.* Pelican Books, Wyman and Sons, London, 1942. pp. 213-214, and
RAYNOR, Henry. *Music in England.* Robert Hale Limited, London. 1980. p. 175-194.

124. It is interesting to note that one of the qualities sought from state leaders is to remain calm in the face of personal attacks. In 1993 in Sydney, Australia, when the Prince of Wales was lunged at by a crowd member toting a gun in his hand, the press praised the Prince for his lack of concern. The image in fact which is projected is that the leader is less concerned about their person than their duty and thus can and would willingly serve the nation before all else.

125. BARBIER, Patrick. *La Vie Quotidienne à l'Opéra au temps de Rossini et de Balzac: Paris 1800-1950.* Hachette, Paris, 1987. p. 14 "Napoléon... eut l'intime conviction que le concours de tous les arts allait servir la gloire de l'empire qu'il fondait. Il s'ensuivit une activé et non negligeable politique de la musique en faveur des grandes scènes de prestige de la capitale, dans laquelle l'Opéra eu une part de choix."

126. See, for example, JOHNSON, James H. *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History.* University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1995. p. 168, and, DUAULT, Alain. *L'Opéra de Paris: Histoire, mythologie, divas.* Editions Sand, 1989. p. 21.

127. CROSTEN, William L. *French Grand Opera: An Art and A Business.* King's Crown Press, New York, 1948. p. 14.
The governing body of the Opéra was fixed by the Imperial Decree of November 1, 1807. At the head was a new officer, the Superintendent of Theaters, whose duty was to act as overseer of the four major houses of the capitol: the Opéra, the Théàtre-Français, the Théàtre de l'Impératrice and the Opéra-Comiqiue. Subordinate to him then was the local administration of the Académie which was composed of a director, a treasurer, an inspector and a secretary-general, all office-holders of the state.

128. CROSTEN, William L. *French Grand Opera: An Art and A Business.* King's Crown Press, New York, 1948. p. 14.

129. References to this document are from GOURRET, Jean. *Ces Hommes Qui on Fait L'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, Paris, 1984. p. 104. I could not have sight of the original document at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal as I was informed that its condition was too fragile.

130. GOURRET, Jean. *Ces Hommes Qui on Fait L'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, Paris, 1984. p. 104.

131. GOURRET, Jean. *Ces Hommes Qui on Fait L'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, Paris, 1984. pp. 104-105.

132. GOURRET, Jean. *Ces Hommes Qui on Fait L'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, Paris, 1984. p. 104.

133. Quoted in GOURRET, Jean. *Ces Hommes Qui on Fait L'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, Paris, 1984. p. 105.

134. Quoted in GOURRET, Jean. *Ces Hommes Qui on Fait L'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, Paris, 1984. p. 104.

135. "Cahier des charges de la direction de l'opéra en régie intéresée, arrêté en commission et approuvé par M. Le ministre de l'intérieur, du 28 février 1831
Article premier - L'administration de l'Académie royale de musique, dite *Opéra*, sera confiée à un directeur-entrepreneur qui l'exploitera pendant six ans à ses risques, périles et fortune."

Quoted by VERON, Louis Désiré. *Mémoires d'un bourgeois à Paris.* Editions Michel de Maule. p. 54 & full text reproduced pp. 269-277.

136. VERON, Louis Désiré. *Mémoires d'un bourgeois à Paris.* Editions Michel de Maule. p. 54.

137. VERON, Louis Désiré. *Mémoires d'un bourgeois à Paris.* Editions Michel de Maule. p. 58.

138. VERON, Louis Désiré. *Mémoires d'un bourgeois à Paris.* Editions Michel de Maule. p. 59.

139. GOURRET, Jean. *Ces Hommes Qui Ont Fait l'Opéra 1669-1984.* Albatros Editions, Paris, 1984. p. 108.

140. GOURRET, Jean. *Histoire des Salles de l'Opéra de Paris.* Guy Tredaniel, Editions de la Maisnie, 1985. p. 113.

141. This house was meant to be temporary but remained in use for the next fifty years until the Palais Garnier was completed in 1772.

142. VERON, Louis Désiré. *Mémoires d'un bourgeois à Paris.* Editions Michel de Maule. pp. 65-66.

143. Cahier des charges de la direction de l'opéra en régie intéresée (arrêté en commission et approuvé par M. Le ministre de l'intérieur, du 28 février 1831)

144. VERON, Louis Désiré. *L'Opéra de Paris 1820-1835* Les silences compacts (1835) Editions Michel de Maule, 1987. p. 70.

145. VERON, Louis Désiré. *L'Opéra de Paris 1820-1835* Les silences compacts (1835) Editions Michel de Maule, 1987. pp. 64-65.

146. VERON, Louis Désiré. *L'Opéra de Paris 1820-1835* Les silences compacts (1835) Editions Michel de Maule, 1987. p. 196.

147. VERON, Louis Désiré. *L'Opéra de Paris 1820-1835* Les silences compacts (1835) Editions Michel de Maule, 1987. p. 197.

148. CROSTEN, William, L. *French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business.* King's Crown Press, New York, 1948. p. 18.

149. BARBIER, Patrick. *La vie quotidienne à l'Opéra au temps de Rossini et de Balzac. Paris 1800-1850.* Hachette, Paris, 1987. p. 133.

150. WALSH, T.J. *Second Empire Opera.* John Calder, London, 1981. p. 48.

151. The policy initiated by the Ministère de la Culture in 1993 is now that opera is to be performed again at the Palais Garnier.

152. GOURRET, Jean. Histoire des Salles de l'Opéra de Paris. Editions de la Maisnie, 1995. p. 185.

153. PATUREAU, Frédérique. *Le Palais Garnier dans la Société Parisienne 1875-1914.* Mardaga, 1991. p. 10:
"...des 1860, que le futur bâtiment est investi d'une triple mission: traduire ostensiblement le rayonnement de la France dans le monde, consacrer officiellement la prééminence de l'art lyrique sur les autres genres musicaux, offrir, enfin aux fastes de la vie mondaine un cadre d'exception."

154. PATUREAU, Frédérique. *Le Palais Garnier dans la Société Parisienne 1875-1914.* Mardaga, 1991. p. 10.

155. Opéra de la Bastille. Concours international d'architecture. Dossier élaboré par la Mission de la Bastille (1983) Press Release, Ministère de la Culture, Paris, le 17 janvier 1983 Jack LANG

156. PATUREAU, Frédérique. *Le Palais Garnier dans la Société Parisienne 1875-1914.* Mardaga, 1991. p. 431.

157. GOURRET, Jean. Histoire des Salles de l'Opéra de Paris. Editions de la Maisnie, 1995. p. 171.

158. PATUREAU, Frédérique. *Le Palais Garnier dans la Société Parisienne 1875-1914.* Mardaga, 1991. p. 19.

159. SAINT PULGENT, Maryvonne de. *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Robert Lafont, 1991. pp. 153-154.

160. BOYSSE, Ernest. *Les abonnés de l'opéra. 1783-1786.* A Quantin, Paris, 1881. pp. iii-iv.

161. THOMSON, David. *England in the Twentieth Century.* The Pelican History of England, Penguin Books, 1981. p. 120.

162. THOMSON, David. *England in the Twentieth Century.* The Pelican History of England, Penguin Books, 1981. p. 20.

163. "By 1914 France had grown only to 39 1/2 millions [whereas] Great Britain had 45 millions" COBBAN, Alfred. *A History of Modern France. Volume 3: 1871-1962.* Penguin Books, 1955. p. 72.

164. COBBAN, Alfred. *A History of Modern France. Volume 3: 1871-1962.* Penguin Books, 1955. p. 220.

165. This is best illustrated by increased suffrage of the British population in the early years of the century:
"The extension of the vote to the whole adult population in 1918 and 1928 was a strategic compromise made to avoid political breakdown and to rescue the authority of the state." SCANNELL, Paddy. 'A conspiracy of Silence. The State, the BBC and public opinion in the formative years of British broadcasting' in McLENNON, G. HELD, D. and HALL, S. Eds. *State and Society in Contemporary Britain. A Critical Introduction. 1922-39* Polity Press, 1984. p. 27.

166. In the United Kingdom:"The age to which education was compulsory had been raised to twelve in 1899. After 1900, local authorities had power to raise it to fourteen." THOMSON, David. *England in the Twentieth Century.* The Pelican History of England, Penguin Books, 1981. p. 20.

167. THOMSON, David. *England in the Twentieth Century.* The Pelican History of England, Penguin Books, 1981. p. 20.

168. SHAW, Sir Roy. *Elitism versus Populism in the Arts.* City Arts, John Offord publications in association with the Centre for Arts, City University, London. p. 7.

169. ELIOT, T.S. *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture.* Faber and Faber, London, 1958. p. 299.

170. CAREY, John. *The Intellectuals and the Masses.* Faber and Faber, London, 1992. p. 3.

171. BOLL, André. *L'opéra de l'Avenir. Etude polémique.* Olivier Perrin, 1968. p. 47.

172. CAREY, John. *The Intellectuals and the Masses.* Faber and Faber, London, 1992. p. 3.

173. SCANNELL, Paddy. 'A conspiracy of Silence. The State, the BBC and public opinion in the formative years of British broadcasting' in McLENNON, G. HELD, D. and HALL, S. Eds. *State and Society in Contemporary Britain. A Critical Introduction. 1922-39* Polity Press, 1984. p. 153.

174. BRIGGS, Asa. *BBC. The First Fifty Years.* Oxford University Press, 1985. p. 58.

175. BRIGGS, Asa. *The Birth of Broadcasting.* Oxford University Press, 1961. pp. 360-84.

176. BRIGGS, Asa. *BBC. The First Fifty Years.* Oxford University Press, 1985. p. 15.

177. BRIGGS, Asa. *The Golden Age of Wireless.* Oxford University Press, 1965. pp. 45-46.

178. BRIGGS, Asa. *The Golden Age of Wireless.* Oxford University Press, 1965. p. 45.

179. FUMAROLI, Marc. *L'Etat Culturel. Essai sur une réligion moderne.* Editions de Fallois, 1992. p. 24.

180. FUMAROLI, Marc. *L'Etat Culturel. Essai sur une réligion moderne.* Editions de Fallois, 1992. p. 60.

181. ADORNO, Theodor W. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music.* The Seabury Press, New York, 1976. p. 80.

182. BOLL, André. *L'opéra de l'Avenir. Etude polémique.* Olivier Perrin, 1968. p. 47.

183. Décret de nomination of André Malraux as Ministre d'Etat chargé des affaires culturelles, 3 February 1959 quoted by FUMAROLI, Marc. *L'Etat Culturel. Essai sur une réligion moderne.* Editions de Fallois, 1992. p. 65.

184. Opéra de la Bastille: Concours international d'architecture. Dossier élaboré par la Mission de la Bastille (1983)

185. FUMAROLI, Marc. *L'Etat Culturel. Essai sur une réligion moderne.* Editions de Fallois, 1992. p. 300.

186. This most quotable objection is by the actor-manager Beerbohm Tree in *Thoughts and After Thoughts*, London, 1913. p. 185. This is fully covered in STOKES, R. *Resistible Theatre.* London, 1972.

187. EVANS, Ifor and GLASCOW, Mary. *The Arts in England.* Falcon Press, London, 1947. p. 16.

188. READ, Herbert. *To Hell with Culture and Other Essays on Art and Society.* Shocker Books, New York, 1963. p. 97.

189. READ, Herbert. *To Hell with Culture and Other Essays on Art and Society.* Shocker Books, New York, 1963. p. 97.

190. SCANNELL, Paddy. 'A conspiracy of Silence. The State, the BBC and public opinion in the formative years of British broadcasting' in McLENNON, G. HELD, D. and HALL, S. Eds. *State and Society in Contemporary Britain. A Critical Introduction. 1922-39* Polity Press, 1984. p. 152.

191. KEYNES, Maynard. The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes. in *The Listener* 12 July 1945.

192. KEYNES, Maynard. The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes. in *The Listener* 12 July 1945.

193. KEYNES, Maynard. The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes. in *The Listener* 12 July 1945.

194. PICK, John. *Vile Jelly: The Birth, Life, and Lingering Death of the Arts Council of Great Britain.* The Brynmill Press Limited, Norfolk, 1991. p. 82.

195. KEYNES, Maynard. The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes. in *The Listener* 12 July 1945.

196. 'The People's Palace' in *The Times* 2 October 1946.

197. KEYNES, Maynard. The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes. in *The Listener* 12 July 1945.

198. H. Dalton, letter to Sir John Anderson, 1 August 1946, quoted in PICK, John. *The West End: Mismanagement and Snobbery.* City Arts, London, 1983. p. 158.

199. 'Crisis at Covent Garden' in *Opera Now* March 1991 p. 14.

200. LITTLEJOHN, David. *The Ultimate Art: Essays Around and About Opera.* University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1992. p. 31.

201. *The Royal Opera House Album* 'English Composers at Covent Garden' by Eric Walter White, p. 43.

202. Covent Garden Opera Annual. New Opera Houses - Old Traditions 1955.

203. CAREY, John. *The Intellectuals and the Masses.* Faber and Faber, London, 1992. p. 208.

204. *The Royal Opera House Album* 'The Resident Opera Company - Karl Rankl' by Frank Howes p. 25.

205. *The Royal Opera House Album* 'The Resident Opera Company - Karl Rankl' by Frank Howes p. 25.

206. LITTLEJOHN, David. *The Ultimate Art: Essays Around and About Opera.* University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1992. pp. 27-28.

207. BOUVIER-LAPIERRE, Bernard. *Faut-il fermer les maisons de plaisir?* Presses Universaires de Nancy, 1988. p. 13.

208. HALTRECHT, M. *The Quiet Showman - Sir David Webster and The Royal Opera House.* Collins, London, 1975. pp. 51-52.

209. BOVIER-LAPIERRE, Bernard. *Faut-il fermer les maisons de plaisir?* Presses Universaires de Nancy, 1988. p. 12-13.

210. DENT, E.J. *Opera in English.* Penguin, London, 1946. p. 9.

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212. CAREY, John. *The Intellectuals and the Masses.* Faber and Faber, London, 1992. p. 199.

213. DENT, E.J. *Opera in English.* Penguin, London, 1946. p. 31.

214. *The Times* 30 May 1947

215. *The Covent Garden Album* Introduction by Harold Rosenthal p.19

216. *The Times* 17 June 1946

217. *The Times* 17 June 1946

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219. *Arts Management Weekly* No. 209 22 April 1993. From article by Tom Higgins 'Garden's Decision Time'

220. ADORNO, Theodor W. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music.* The Seabury Press, New York, 1976. p. 81.

221. *The Guardian* article by Crispian Palmer, 27 October 1992.

222. Letter to the Editor, *The Sunday Times*, 30th October 1994.

223. *Letter to the Editor, The Sunday Times*, 30th October 1994.

224. de SAINT PULGENT. Maryvonne. *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Robert Lafont, Paris, 1991. p. 35.

225. Royal Opera House, Covent Garden Ltd. Annual Report, Press Notice 1985/1986, p. 2.

226. 'Crisis at Covent Garden - The Poverty Trap' by Robert Maycock in *Opera Now* March 1991. p. 14.

227. SOUBIE, Raymond. *Rapport au Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication sur la situation et les perspectives de l'Opéra 1987.*

228. SOUBIE, Raymond. *Rapport au Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication sur la situation et les perspectives de l'Opéra 1987. Deuxième Partie - La Gestion de l'Opéra de Paris* p. 63.

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230. SOUBIE, Raymond. *Rapport au Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication sur la situation et les perspectives de l'Opéra 1987.* p. 66.

231. SOUBIE, Raymond. *Rapport au Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication sur la situation et les perspectives de l'Opéra 1987.* p. 67.

232. SOUBIE, Raymond. *Rapport au Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication sur la situation et les perspectives de l'Opéra 1987.* p. 67.

233. BOLL André. *L'Opéra de l'Avenir.* Ed. Olivier Perrin, Librairie Gründ, Paris, 1968. Quoted by Soubie p. 90.

234. *Le Monde* 17th October 1967.

235. *Opera Houses? - Blow them up! Pierre Boulez versus Rolf Liebermann* in *Opera* June 1968, p. 445.

236. BOLL, André. *L'Opéra de l'avenir.* Olivier Perrin, Paris, 1968. p. 13.

237. LITTLEJOHN, David. *The Ultimate Art: Essays Around and About Opera.* University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1992. p. 28.

238. JOUFFRAY, Alain. Avons-nous encore une académie nationale de musique? II. Le Temps des Désillusions. in *Opéra, la revue française de l'art lyrique.* Mensuel numéro 115, 1er juin 1976. p. 17.

239. PATUREAU Fréderique. *Les Pratiquants de l'art lyrique aujourd'hui: Une étude du public actuel de l'opéra de Paris.* Editions de la Maison de Sciences de l'Homme, 1991. p. 1.

240. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. p. 44. (M Audon)

241. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. p. 217.

242. de SAINT PULGENT. Maryvonne. *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Robert Lafont, Paris, 1991. p. 124.

243. de SAINT PULGENT, Maryvonne. *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Robert Lafont, Paris, 1991. p. 125.

244. de SAINT PULGENT, Maryvonne. *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Robert Lafont, Paris, 1991. p. 157.

245. Press Release. Ministère de la Culture, Paris le 17 janvier 1983, Jack Lang
"The present opera house ... was built for the society of the Second Empire. In choosing to build a new edifice, the government desires not only to facilitate access to the opera for the greatest amount of spectators possible but also to adapt it to the aspirations of contemporary society."

246. REMY, Pierre-Jean. *Bastille: Rêver un opéra. Carnets.* Plon, Paris, 1989. p. 43.

247. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. pp. 149-150.

248. SOUBIE, Raymond. *Rapport au Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication sur la situation et les perspectives de l'Opéra 1987.* p. 26.

249. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. p. 67. (Charlet)

250. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. p. 149.

251. *Time Magazine* 18 September 1989 'Paris à la Mitterrand' by Robert Hughes.

252. *Time Magazine* 17 January 1994 'Storming the Bastille'

253. *The Sunday Times* Magazine 24 November 1994 '*The Phantoms of the Opera*' by Charles Bremmer.

254. de SAINT PULGENT. *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Robert Lafont, Paris, 1991. pp. 244-245.

255. *The Sunday Times* Magazine August 1994

256. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. p. 218.

257. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. p. 223. (Audon)

258. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. p. 292. (Audon)

259. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. p. 271. (Dittman)

260. URFALINO, Philippe. *Quatre voix pour un opéra. Une histoire de l'Opéra Bastille racontée par M. Audon, F. Bloch-Lainé, G. Charlet, M. Dittman.* Editions Métaílié, 1990. p. 291. (Audon)

261. de SAINT PULGENT, Maryvonne. *Le Syndrome de l'Opéra.* Robert Lafont, Paris, 1991. pp. 304-305.

262. *The Sunday Times* Magazine 24 November 1994 '*The Phantoms of the Opera*' by Charles Bremmer.

Chapter 4: The Importance of Opera

1. HUGHES, P.C. (Spike) *Great Opera Houses.* Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1956. p. 117.

2. HUGHES, P.C. (Spike) *Great Opera Houses.* Weidenfield and Nicholson, London, 1956. p. 117: "it was significant that international help was forthcoming for its reconstruction"

3. RIEMER, Andrew *The Hapsburg Café.* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1993. pp. 62-63.
Riemer further develops this analogy by linking the Staatsoper to an historical and pan-European interpretation of the meaning of the house:
"The present theatre, though somewhat different from the original structure, preserves the social, cultural and spiritual assumptions on which the regal or ducal opera houses of Europe -- from London to Moscow, from Stockholm to Lisbon were based."

4. LITTLEJOHN, David. *The Ultimate Art: Essays Around and About Opera.* University of California Press, Berkeley and LA California, 1992. p. 28.

5. HORNE, Donald. *The Great Museum.* Pluto Press, 1984. p. 29.

6. HORNE, Donald. *The Great Museum.* Pluto Press, 1984. p. 34.

7. HAWKES, Terence. *Structuralism and Semiotics* quoted by HORNE, Donald. *The Great Museum*. Pluto Press, 1984. pp. 44-45:
"Nothing in the world can be merely utilitarian. Even the most ordinary buildings organise space in various ways, and in so doing they issue some kind of message about the society's priorities, its presuppositions concerning human nature, politics, economics, over and above their overt concern with the provision of shelter, entertainment, medical care, or whatever. One can learn to 'read' buildings and ask 'What do these buildings say?'"

8. KALDOR, Andras. *Watercolours of the Opera Houses of Europe*. Exhibition catalogue (1990) Coe Kerr Gallery Inc. (New York) and Stephanie Hoppen (London)
Exceptions are 19th century theatres. Opera houses distinguish themselves from those theatres in other ways however. For example by the quality of the furnishings. If one compares the Coliseum and the Royal Opera House it is evident that the Coliseum is the larger theatre but it does not contain the private loges, the foyer spaces and the same quality of furnishings as Covent Garden.

9. JOHNSON, James, H. *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History.* University of California Press, 1995. p. 10
Quotation continues: "The six boxes on the sides of the stage – by far the most public in the house – were decorated along the front with interlacing designs in gold. Painted allegories of music interwoven with garlands appeared on the front of the first-level boxes. The ceilings of these first boxes were richly painted with figures from mythology, a clear mark of distinction over the plain turquoise-blue ceilings of the seconds".

10. CHORLEY, Henry F. *Music and Manners in France and Germany: A Series of Travelling Sketches of Art and Society*. 3 Vols. Brown, Green and Longman, London, 1844. Vol. 1. pp. 25-26.

11. There may be many reasons why the distinction between opera house and theatre district are maintained. For example, George Saunders in his *Treatise on Theatres* states that their difference lay in the fact that opera was for "those of the first rank" and theatre for "every class of people." SAUNDERS, George. *Treatise on Theatres*. London, 1790.

12. BOURSNELL, Clive. *The Royal Opera House Covent Garden.* Hamilton, London, 1982. p. 7 "...After 250 years the Royal Opera House is one of this country's grand old institutions."

13. SAID, Edward, W. *Culture and Imperialism.* Vintage, 1993. p. 155.
To the north were the railway station, Shepheards Hotel, and the Azbakiyah Gardens for which, Abu-Lughod adds, 'Ismail imported the French landscape architect whose work he admired in the Bois de Boulogne and Champs de Mars ...' ... Behind the Opera House lay the teeming quarters of Muski, Sayida Zeinab, Ataba al-Khadra, held back by the Opera House's imposing size and European authority.

14. BRADDON, Russell. *Joan Sutherland.* Collins, London, 1962. p. 229.

15. The opera house in Finland, a glorious building in glass and white marble, is constructed on the city's edge in the most prestigious part of Helsinki.

16. LINDENBERGER, E. *Opera: The Extravagant Art*. Cornell University Press, 1984. p. 238. "As a structure, the opera house has itself exerted various forms of symbolic power. Charles III, who built San Carlo in 1737 to glorify the Bourbon dynasty in Naples, placed the house next to his royal palace, the juxtaposition of the two buildings enabled him at once to advertise the union of art and power and to enter his box without the inconvenience of stepping outside."

17. LEACROFT, R & H. *Theatre and Playhouse: An Illustrated Survey of Theatre Building from Ancient Greece to the Present Day.* Methuen, London, 1984. pp. 47, 60, 45.

18. *Le Monde* Dimanche 8, Lundi 9 janvier, 1995. 'Il y a cent vingt ans. L'inauguration de l'Opéra-Garnier' p. 2.

19. CARLSON, Marvin. *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture.* Cornell University Press, 1989. p. 68.

20. KALDOR, A. *The Opera Houses of Europe.* Exhibition Catalogue, 1990.

21. CARLSON, Marvin. *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture.* Cornell University Press, 1989. p. 79.

22. WREN, Sir Christopher. *Parentalia* (1750) from *Cambridge Cultural History* p. 3.

23. EDELMAN, Murray. *Politics as Symbolic Action* quoted by HORNE, Donald. *The Public Culture: The Triumph of Industrialism.* Pluto, London, 1986. p. 18.

24. GOURRET, Jean. *L'Histoire des salles de l'Opéra de Paris.* Guy Tredaniel, Editions de la Maisnie, 1985. p. 12.

25. CARLSON, Marvin. *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture.* Cornell University Press, 1989. p. 81.

26. BARTHES, Roland. 'The Eiffel Tower' in *Selected Writings* Ed. Susan Sontag. Fontana. 1982. p. 247.

27. PATUREAU, Fréderique. *Le Palais Garnier dans la Société Parisienne 1875-1914.* Mardaga, Liège, 1991.

28. de SAINT PULGENT, Maryvonne. *Le Syndrôme de l'Opéra.* Robert Laffont, 1991. p. 207
"Dès lors ni le Louvre, ni Vincennes, ni Versailles, ni aucun autre monument royal ne répondent à la définition du Grand Projet, faute d'avoir été créés pour abriter un de ces phares artistiques que la France s'est donné pour mission d'édifier afin d'éclairer le monde."

29. *Entracte* 5th January 1875 quoted by DUALT, Alain. *L'Opéra de Paris: Histoire, mythologie, divas.* Editions Sand, 1989.

30. Inauguration of Bastille 14 July 1989 - *Le Parisien* 13 July 1989, Agnès Dalbard.

31. BOVIER-LAPIERRE, Bernard. *Opéras: Faut-il fermer les maisons de plaisir?* Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1988. p. 129.

32. (Jean-Pierre Agrémy writing under the pseudonym:) REMY, Pierre-Jean. *Bastille: rêver un opéra. Carnets.* Plon, Paris, 1989. p. 220.

33. REMY, Pierre-Jean. *Bastille: rêver un opéra. Carnets.* Plon, Paris, 1989. pp. 220-221.

34. REMY, Pierre-Jean. *Bastille: rêver un opéra. Carnets.* Plon, Paris, 1989. p. 51.

35. REMY, Pierre-Jean. *Bastille: rêver un opéra. Carnets.* Plon, Paris, 1989. p. 224.

36. REMY, Pierre-Jean. *Bastille: rêver un opéra. Carnets.* Plon, Paris, 1989. p. 225.

37. CARLSON, Marvin. *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture.* Cornell University Press, 1989. p. 13.

38. RIEMER, Andrew. *The Hapsburg Café.* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1993. p. 36.

39. RIEMER, Andrew. *The Hapsburg Café.* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1993. pp. 64-65.

40. ROSAINT. 'Le Lyrique Hors des Murs' in *Opéra: La Diva et le Souffleur.* Series Mutations No. 71, Autrement, Paris, 1975.

41. CLEMANT, Catherine. *Opera or the Undoing of Women.* Virago Press, 1989. p. 3 translation of *L'Opéra ou la Défaite des femmes.*

42. *Le Monde* Dimanche 8, lundi 9 janvier 1995. 'Il y a cent vingt ans. L'inauguration de l'Opéra-Garnier' by Anne Rey.

43. GARNIER, Charles. *Le Theatre.* Paris, 1871 p. 45, paraphrased in CARLSON, Marvin *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture.* Cornell University Press, 1989. p. 187.

44. RIEMER, Andrew. *The Hapsburg Café.* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1993. p. 72.

45. HUBBLE, Ava. *More than an Opera House.* Landsdowne Press, Sydney, 1983. p. 36.

46. CLEMANT, Catherine. *Opera or the Undoing of Women.* Virago Press, 1989. p. 9. translation of *L'Opéra ou la Défaite des femmes.*

47. Quoted in SMITH, W.C. *The Italian Opera and Contemporary Ballet in London 1789-1820.* Society for Theatre Research, London, 1955. p. 88.

48. REMY, Pierre-Jean. *Bastille: rêver un opéra. Carnets.* Plon, Paris, 1989. p. 34.

49. RIEMER, Andrew. *The Hapsburg Café.* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1993. p. 42.

50. ALDA, Frances. *Men, Women and Tenors.* quoted in CHRISTIANSON, Rupert. *The Grand Obsession: A Collins Anthology of Opera.* Collins, 1988. p. 256.
Quotation continues:
"And this was New York. The richest, most modern, most progressive city in the world.
It seemed to me incredible that with all the great private fortunes in America, and with the American reputation for giving education a very high place, no one person had ever come forward and built for New York an opera house worthy of the city and of the art of singing.
I have never got used to the complaisant stagnation of America's *soi-disant* society. The sentiment among the Metropolitan's box holders in 1908 seemed to be that what had been good enough for their fathers and for themselves back in 1883 was still good enough.
And a bit too good for the new rich who were pressing in on their sacred circle."

51. RAGUENET, François. *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français* (1702) quoted in STRUNK, O, Ed. *Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era.* W.W. Norton and Co., 1965. p. 127.

52. BURNEY, Charles. *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Italy.* Ed. Percy A. Scholes. (1959) *Vol II. An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands, 1772.* pp. 161-162.

53. Voltaire wrote in a letter of March 30 1740, (quoted by CARLSON, Marvin *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture.* Cornell University Press, 1989. p. 73) (Voltaire, Oeuvres, complètes, 52 vols (Paris 1877-85), 35:406).

54. MOUNT EDGCUMBE, Richard, 2nd Earl of. *Musical Reminiscences.* Richmond, Surrey, 1834. pp. 177-178.

55. BURNEY, Charles. *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Italy.* Ed. Percy A. Scholes. (1959) *Vol II. An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands, 1772.* p. 66.

56. BURNEY, Charles. *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Italy.* Ed. Percy A. Scholes. (1959) *Vol II. An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands, 1772.* p. 9.

57. BURNEY, Charles. *An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Italy.* Ed. Percy A. Scholes. (1959) *Vol II. An Eighteenth Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands, 1772.* p. 8.

58. STENDHAL. *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817.* Julliard Litterature, Paris, 1817. 10 novembre 1816 p. 26.

59. STENDHAL quoted and translated by DIZIKIES, John. *Opera in America: A Cultural History.* Yale University Press, 1993. p. 30.

60. NB: The Fenice theatre was burnt down in January 1996 and will be reconstructed to replicate the old theatre in as many aspects as possible.
"Ce théâtre, ... a une façade tout à fait originale et qui donne sur un grand canal ; on y arrive et l'on en sort en gondole, et toutes les gondoles étant de la même couleur, c'est un lieu fatal pour les jaloux. Ce théâtre a été magnifique du temps du gouvernement Saint-Marc comme disent les Vénitiens. Napoléon lui donna encore quelques beaux jours; maintenant il tombe et se dégrade comme le reste de Venise. Cette ville singulière et la plus gaie de l'Europe, ne sera plus qu'un village malsain dans trente ans d'ici, à moins que l'Italie ne se réveille et ne se donne un seul roi, auquel cas je donne ma voix à Venise, ville imprenable, pour être capitale."

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"A vast and ordinarily unnoticed area of the history of the arts is the development of systems of social signals that what is now to be made available is to be regarded as art. These systems are very diverse, but between them they constitute the practical social organisation of that first deep cultural form in which certain arts are grouped, emphasized and distinguished."

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"The opera-goer, that is to say, the citizen in an opera hat and an opera frame of mind."

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"But by the short Experience we had then had of Operas; by the high Reputation they seem'd to have been arriv'd at, the Year before by their Power of drawing the whole Body of Nobility, as by Enchantment, to their Solemnities; by that Prodigality of Expence, at which they were so willing to support them; and from the late extraordinary Profits *Swiney* had made of them; what Mountains did we not hope from this Mole-hill?"

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"To all places of general resort, where the standard of pleasure is erected, we run with equal eagerness, or appearance of eagerness, for very different reasons. One goes that he might say he has been there, another because he never misses. This man goes to try what he can find, and that to discover what others find. Whatever diversion is costly will be frequented by those who desire to be thought rich; and whatever has; by any accident, become fashionable easily continues its reputation, because every one is ashamed of not partaking it."

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119. EBERS, John. *Seven Years of the King's Theatre.* W.H. Ainsworth, London, 1828. p. 165.

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131. SHAW, George Bernard. *London Music in 1890-1894.* Constable, London, 1932. Vol. 2. 18 March 1891.

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221. COOK, Ida. *We Followed our Stars.* Hamish Hamilton, London, 1950. p. 40.

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225. APTHORP, Shirley. 'A Fine Line' in *Quantas Magazine* September 1995

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228. RIEMER, Andrew. *The Hapsburg Café.* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1993.

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230. The souvenir programme of the Williamson-Melba Grand Opera Season in His Majesty's Theatre

231. The souvenir programme of the Williamson-Melba Grand Opera Season in His Majesty's Theatre

232. The souvenir programme of the Williamson-Melba Grand Opera Season in His Majesty's Theatre.

233. TELERAMA. LES HORS-SERIE *Vive l'Opéra.* avril 1992 p. 61.

234. TELERAMA. LES HORS-SERIE *Vive l'Opéra.* avril 1992. p. 63.

235. 1920 - Winter season of grand opera sung in English 24th February - 3rd April. (Popular Operas at Popular Prices)
Royal Opera Covent Garden. Season of International Opera 1938. June 15, 1938.

La Bohème was heard in Manchester in English in April 1987. Not until two years later was it heard in the 'grand' season at Covent Garden. Contents of programme: synopsis and cast list and credits; all the rest is advertisements for hotels, cars, restaurants, beverages.

236. Covent Garden Programme *Die Walküre* 6th May, 1935.

237. Covent Garden Programme *Die Walküre* 6th May, 1935.

238. Covent Garden Programme *Das Rosenkavelier* 1st May, 1933.

239. Covent Garden Programme *Parsifal* 18th May, 1933.

240. Covent Garden Programme *Parsifal* 18th May, 1933.

241. Covent Garden Programme Command Performance 29th May, 1935.

242. Royal Grand Opera Season Programme, Australia, 1907

Chapter 5: The Sydney Opera House

1. The Palais Garnier in Paris is a good example of this, designed during the Second Empire as a result of an international competition and opened with pomp and ceremony in the IIIrd Republic. So too is the opera house in Cairo, designed for the presentation of Verdi's *Aida*. Lyrical art thus becomes the symbol of the capacity or incapacity of countries possessing western culture to affirm their cultural identity to the world.

2. BOVIER-LAPIERRE, Bernard. *Opéras: Faut-il fermer les maisons de plaisir?* Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1988. Introduction by Claude Mollard p. 8: "L'art lyrique devient ainsi le symbole de la capacité ou de l'incapacité des pays de culture occidentale à affirmer dans le monde leur identité culturelle."

3. CARLSON, Marvin. *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture.* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1989. p. 5.

4. CARGHER, John. *Opera and Ballet in Australia.* Cassell, Australia, 1977. p. 117.

5. *Sydney Morning Herald* Opera Souvenir, Monday October 15, 1973

6. CARLSON, Marvin. *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture.* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1989. pp. 83-84.

7. YEOMANS, John. *The Other Taj Mahal. What Happened to the Sydney Opera House.* Longman, Sydney, 1968. p. 3.

8. This is well demonstrated by the number of building completions at this time. In 1946 for example, there were less than 1,000 buildings completed and yet by 1950 this figure had increased markedly to 13,000 and 15,500 by 1958.

9. WAITES, James. 'The Sydney Opera House - A Cultural Complex or Sacred Site?' in Programme of *The Eighth Wonder* World Première 14th October 1995.

10. KERR, James Semple. *Sydney Opera House: An Interim Plan for the Conservation of the Sydney Opera House and its Site.* Sydney Opera House Trust, Sydney, 1993. Appendix 5. Also quoted by YEOMANS, John. *The Other Taj Mahal. What Happened to the Sydney Opera House.* Longman, Sydney, 1968. p. 13.

11. YEOMANS, John. *The Other Taj Mahal. What Happened to the Sydney Opera House.* Longman, Sydney, 1968. p. 13.

12. YEOMANS, John. *The Other Taj Mahal. What Happened to the Sydney Opera House.* Longman, Sydney, 1968. pp. 12-13.

13. YEOMANS, John. *The Other Taj Mahal. What Happened to the Sydney Opera House.* Longman, Sydney, 1968. p. 177.

14. CARGHER, John. *Opera and Ballet in Australia.* Cassell, Australia, 1977. p. 117.

15. These books are some of the very few written on this subject thus representing a paucity of research in this area.

16. *The Sun* Front Page 17th October, 1973.

17. *Sydney Morning Herald* 7th October 1948 quoted by YEOMANS, John. *The Other Taj Mahal. What Happened to the Sydney Opera House.* Longman, Sydney, 1968. p. 8.

18. YEOMANS, John. *The Other Taj Mahal. What Happened to the Sydney Opera House.* Longman, Sydney, 1968. p. 3.

19. CAHILL, John, MLA. 8th November 1954

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Chapter 6: Conclusion

1. The symbols and rituals associated with the opera are akin to high state ceremonies in another sense. Their derivation is often lost in the mists of time; it is their longevity, and the fact that they are always enacted at particular points in the ceremonies which give them their significance and meaning. Few people, for instance, would recall the historical

incident which gives rise to Black Rod beating on the doors of the House of Lords at the annual opening of the British Parliament, but the ceremony is invested with high significance nevertheless.

2. Until the Second World War everyone attending a theatrical first night in London or Paris wore formal evening dress (and many did so at other performances in the fashionable theatres). This is no longer the case, although significantly people still dress distinctly for opera-going. A random survey in London, Paris and Sydney showed that out of 112 people questioned, none was prepared to say that they would go to the opera wearing the same casual clothes they would wear to the theatre, or to visiting a major exhibition (1993/94).

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Resource Centre, The City University, Department of Arts, Policy and Management
The British Library

Paris
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Bibliothèque de l'Opéra de Paris
Bibliothèque Nationale
Musée d'Orsay
UNESCO Library
In the OECD Library prevailing economic texts can be found.

Harvard
Loeb Music Library

Sydney
The Wolinski Library, The Sydney Opera House
The Mitchell Library